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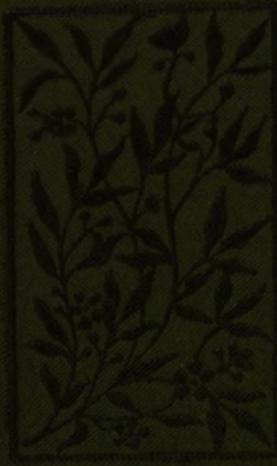
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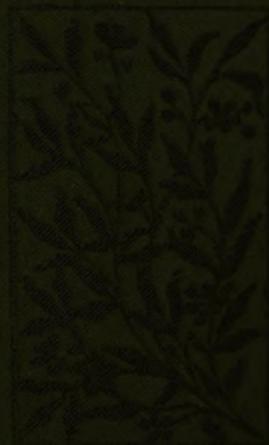
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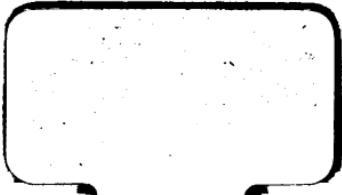
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# YOUR SUNDAYS

*REV. GEORGE EVERARD M.A.*









**YOUR SUNDAYS.**



# YOUR SUNDAYS.

**Fifty-two Short Readings,**

**ESPECIALLY INTENDED FOR SCHOOLBOYS.**

BY THE

**REV. GEORGE EVERARD, M.A.**

AUTHOR OF "YOUR INNINGS."

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THESE pages were written to supply a want which has often been felt. There are many lads at school who might be glad to have a short portion, practical in its character, to read each Sunday morning, that might be a word of help through the week. I trust that for this purpose the book may be useful. But it may be useful to many others beside schoolboys. With slight omissions or alterations it may afford Sunday readings for a family. It may also suggest subjects to those who have to give addresses in mission-rooms or school-rooms. No less may it be profitable for private reading, and also for Sunday use on board ship, and in places where the means of grace are but few. I have endeavoured to take in a very wide range of subjects, specially bearing on the way of salvation,

the work of Christ and of the Spirit, the consolations of the Gospel, and the details of the Christian life.

May the Good Spirit, the Comforter, by means of it, teach, strengthen, and sanctify those who read it.

GEORGE EVERARD.

CHRIST CHURCH VICARAGE, DOVER,  
*June 1885.*

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# YOUR SUNDAYS.

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## I.

### YOUR SUNDAYS.

I ALWAYS like the word "Sunday." Though it comes down to us as a relic of heathen times, when men on that day worshipped the glorious sun, yet we may look at it now in another light. "Sunday" ought to be a day full of sunshine. It ought to be a bright and joyous day. It ought to be a day when, above all other days, we recognise the presence of the Lord Jesus, who is the true "Sun of righteousness," and when we delight to think of Him and to worship Him.

Or we may regard Sunday in another way. A nobleman has a magnificent park and gardens. All sorts of beautiful flowers, plants, and shrubs adorn the various beds in the garden. Fountains are playing, and wide-spreading trees form a delicious shade from the sultry heat of summer. In his free bounty

A

1st Sunday.]

the owner of this property throws it open for the use of those who dwell round about. They may walk in it, and enjoy the balmy air and delicious fragrance that is found there. They may rest under the trees, and drink of the fountains, and taste of the fruits that grow there ; but one thing is forbidden—they must not with heedless foot trample down the beds, break the fences, or injure the trees or shrubs that are the beauty of the place.

Such, it seems to me, is something like a type of God's bountiful purpose in the gift of His holy day. He gives it for our benefit and happiness ; He gives it for rest and refreshment both to body and soul.

Let there be a joyous and a thankful use of this day. Seek to gain from it all the help and comfort it is intended to bring. It is a day when heaven's gate stands open, and when the fragrant breezes of heavenly thoughts and hopes come to lift us above the common round of other days. Who can tell the draughts of living water, and the fruits of the better Canaan, and the thousandfold sources of gladness which a Christian lad may find in a well-spent Sunday ?

*Only you must not trample on the beds, or destroy the fences.* Turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on God's holy day. Firmly maintain the sacred character of the day, and do nothing to break down the barriers which mark it off from other days. Whatever be the motive men may have in striving to secularise it and make it a

day of mere recreation and amusement, I believe it to be the greatest possible wrong both to the Church of God and to the welfare of our country.

I fear that in Public schools Sunday is far from being a happy day. There are often many leisure hours, and sometimes they drag heavily. Then sometimes on that day recollection travels homeward, and school life seems all the more dreary as you recall happy associations of sacred music, and many other sources of innocent and profitable enjoyment with those you have loved at your own fireside.

I should like to make your Sundays a wee bit brighter and more cheery if I could. For this purpose this book has been written. A short message from a friend every Sunday morning, a message that you can easily read in a few minutes, and that may uphold you in what is right and strengthen you when cast down, may be one way of doing this.

Take a few further hints which may tend in the same direction to make Sunday hours more helpful, and therefore brighter and happier.

As far as possible let the day be always linked with home. Try to catch and keep a home spirit. Pay heart-visits to the room where you have been accustomed to breakfast, and dine, and sit with those you love. Think of father and mother and brothers and sisters at Church, and let the bond of home affection be drawn tighter round your heart. Let a special place be found in your prayers for each one who will be thinking of you. Have a special

text from an Almanac to think about that will be read and thought over by them. If you can, sing or hum over a hymn alone or with a friend that you have joined in under your own roof.

I would suggest another point. Might you not take in your portmanteau, when you go to school, one or two thoughtful Christian books, and then some time each Sunday give a quiet hour or half-hour to read them? I would name such a book as Dean Goulburn on Personal Religion, or his work on the Collects, or Macmillan's "Bible Teachings in Nature," or Bishop Ryle's "Leaders of the Last Century," or some one of Archbishop Trench's invaluable works, or Dean Vaughan on the Liturgy, or a good practical Memoir, such as "Augustine," published by the Religious Tract Society, or "Duncan Matheson." If you brace yourself of your own choice to an hour's good reading each Sunday, I believe it will greatly add to your enjoyment of the whole day.

But with other reading, and above all other reading, remember the One Book that is pre-eminent above all. As there is One Day above all others, so there is One Book to which all others must yield the palm. And when you read the Scriptures always hunt for something. Never skim the surface and then close the Book. But dig deep to find the gold nuggets that lie beneath. Consider what is implied as well as that which is stated.

Knit together passage with passage, and then look at the double lesson. Search for comparisons and contrasts, promises and their fulfilments, precepts and examples of those who have broken or kept them. Find out all that is said about prayer in the Gospels of Luke and John. Then turn back to the Old Testament, and find out the wonders wrought by prayer in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, and through the historical books, specially in 2 Chronicles. Take such words and expressions as "love," "joy," "peace," "holiness," "grace," "born of God," "living water," "thy faith hath saved thee," and try to discover the track of light which they indicate, and the means by which the blessing may be found.

Last of all, I would say, let each Sunday remind you of your true Home in God. In your earthly home it is quite possible some may find but little comfort, and its remembrance may only awaken in you thoughts of sorrow. It may have lost its chief attraction in the death of one who was its brightest light, or there may be a jarring note of some kind, and you can scarcely feel "There is no place like home."

But remember that God Himself, the God of love and peace, is the true Home of your spirit. In Him you may find the warm fire of unchanging affection. In Him you may find a true repose and rest when wearied and overdone with the strain of life's duties. In Him you may find soul-food,

promises, hopes, consolations in Christ that will never fail you. In Him you may find the clothing of a snow-white righteousness which will cover all your sins.

And this Home is eternal. The love of God and the presence of God are an everlasting habitation. When every home on earth is broken up you will not be desolate, for God Himself will be your Dwelling-place and a Refuge for evermore.

Let each Sunday remind you of this Home. Do not try to put God out of His own day that you may find your pleasure in the things of the world. What is this but putting up the shutters to exclude daylight, and then lighting half-a-dozen tapers to take its place?

No, no, this will never do. Strive to get more of God, and not less. Think of Him as infinitely kinder than the kindest father ever known, though so holy that He cannot abide with those who cleave to their sins. "For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. lxxxiv. 10).

## II.

*ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP.*

"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness : let the whole earth stand in awe of Him."—*Ps. xcvi. 9* (P. B. version).

THESE words probably had their first meaning in the holy attire of the Jewish priests when doing their appointed service in the Temple. But those priestly garments were only a type of those spiritual graces and virtues with which the true people of God are to worship before Him.

This thought brings before me a scene of days gone by. I was taking part in the service in a fine old Leicestershire church, and before the service in the vestry there were about twenty chorister boys, as bright, pleasant, spruce-looking lads as I ever set eyes on. I saw they were very anxious to appear in church to the best advantage, for they were very busy tidying their hair, arranging their neckties, and in other matters taking care that nothing in their dress should be out of place. So I called them to me, and said I was very pleased to see them desirous of being in everything tidy

and fit for church, but I asked if they were as anxious to prepare their hearts as they were their dress. The congregation could see their clean faces and their outward appearance, but there was One who looked upon their hearts. Were they as careful to approve themselves to Him? Were they mindful of the word—"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth?" I might have added the words at the heading of this chapter—"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Will you give a thought to this matter? Lads do not think of the great evil it is to go to Church or School chapel in a light and careless spirit. It frequently prevents the possibility of their obtaining any real benefit from the service. Besides this, it is a breach of the third commandment, for heedless, unfelt prayers are distinctly taking God's name in vain.

But if you wish to carry out this precept of the Psalmist, will you bear in mind three things?

Consider with yourself whether you are conscious of any wilful sin kept back. All your worship is utterly worthless if you are continuing in the practice of anything which you know to be wrong.

A young fellow joined the choir of a Church, and then felt thoroughly unhappy, for he felt that the hymn she sang on the Sunday strongly condemned the sins he committed in the week. So he said, "I must give up *sinning* or *singing*." Thank

God, he made a wise choice ; he gave up his former sins, and gave himself to the service of the Lord Jesus.

So if you wish to worship aright, remember it must be "in the beauty of holiness." You must forsake sin whatever it be, deceit or vanity, or any other evil, and give yourself to the Lord Jesus to be clad in the white robe of His righteousness, and to be adorned with the graces of His Spirit.

*Then remember the need of holy awe and reverence in your worship.* "Let the whole earth stand in awe of Him." One of the great evils abroad, even amongst some Christian organisations, is the secular spirit brought into meetings for worship. There is a noise and an excitement which ill befits the holy fear we should ever manifest in God's presence.

If you wish to worship aright, when you enter the church and while you remain there, remember you are on holy ground, according to the promise of the Lord to be in the midst of His people when they meet in His name. Bear this always in mind : when you enter the Church porch, strive to leave behind anything that you feel is unsuitable to the service of God. Say to yourself : "The God whom the holy angels adore has promised to meet me here. I will remember how unworthy I am to draw near to Him, but in faith of Jesus I will speak to Him, and I will hear His voice speaking to me. 'Let the words of my mouth and

the meditation of my heart be here especially, as always, acceptable to thee, O Lord.'"

This leads me to the last thought. Strive to restrain roving imaginations. Particularly in the worship of God should you remember the saying—"Guard well your thoughts, for thoughts are read in heaven."

I know that with all of us thought is ready to run off in a thousand directions. A word in the service or in the sermon may send us miles away from the Church and from everything sacred to something of which we are reminded. But the Lord Jesus can help us in this by His good Spirit. He can fix our minds; and when we do fail, we may in a moment look to Him to cleanse us from these wrong thoughts, and then begin afresh to seek Him more earnestly. If we try to rise to true communion with God, we need never despair. He forgives all that is wandering and imperfect; and through Jesus accepts the least desire to seek Him. Oh that we might cherish more of a true thirst for God! "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth my soul for Thee, O God!"

## III.

*THE PROOF OF SONSHIP.*

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—*Rom. viii. 14.*

THE indwelling power of God's Holy Spirit is the great mark of His true children. When by faith men receive Christ, in Him they receive His Spirit likewise. Thus they are born of God; they are adopted members of His family, and enjoy all the privileges of His household.

And wherever the Holy Spirit dwells, there will be filial liberty, a life of holiness, and a genuine fear of displeasing or dishonouring a Father in heaven. Have you these marks of true sonship? Have you the trustful spirit that enables you to go to God as to a loving father, to tell Him all your troubles, to ask His forgiveness, and to commit yourself to His merciful keeping?

You sometimes see a little boy or girl run into a room and leap on a father's knee or into his arms. Have you something of this mind toward your Father above? Have you confidence toward Him

and a delight in His presence? Then with this is the presence of the Spirit seen in the exhibition of the graces which He implants? Are the fruits of the Spirit manifest in your life? Is your daily walk that of one who is aiming in everything to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus?

And is there a holy shrinking from anything that will grieve your Heavenly Father? I met with an illustration of this point some time ago which presented it to me in a very striking light.

An Arab sheikh, it is said, died in the possession of great wealth. The chief had many sons, but before his death he told the tribe that only one was his real son, and he was to be his heir. But how were they to discover who this real son was? So they instituted a trial of skill in archery. They set up the dead body of the chief against a tree, and the son who could shoot nearest his father's heart was to have the property. The different sons did their best until the bow and arrows were put into the hand of the youngest. When it came to his turn he threw away the bow and arrows and exclaimed, "How can I wound thee, O my father?" "He is the real son!" they exclaimed. So the whole tribe agreed to give him the property.

The filial instinct that shrank from shooting the arrow seemed to make clear to them the true son. I know not whether the story be true or not, but at least it makes the lesson plain of which I would remind you. Who is the true son of the Most

High God? It is the one who will by no means willingly dishonour his Father or wound a Father's heart. It is the one that turns away from any word or action that will grieve a Father's love, or cause Him to withhold His favour and approbation.

Look through your daily life and ask yourself if this be your spirit. Is it a real pain and sorrow to you when you have hastily dropped a word that ought never to have been spoken? When other schoolfellow<sup>s</sup> are making light of sin or turning Bible texts or subjects into ridicule, do you show by your silence, or by a firm but kindly reproof, that you look at the matter very differently? When an older lad would persuade you to break school rules, or to do something which is not quite honest or kind, or to say a word that is not *true in the court of conscience*, are you ready to brave his displeasure rather than break God's law? Do you prove your sonship, even in the eyes of the ungodly, by refusing to follow a multitude in doing evil?

Be sure that if you would have your Father's property you must show that you are a true son. There are those who are satisfied with their position, and glory in the fact that by virtue of their baptism they are "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." But baptism will prove of no value to you unless you have the Spirit of God to guide you, and the fear and love of God ruling in your heart. You

may be a *son*, but not a *real son*. You may be a son of God by profession, and by your position in the Christian Church, but are you a *real son*—born of God, like God, loving God, pleasing God? On this everything depends. From such God withholds no good thing. His kingdom, His inheritance, His many mansions, His heavenly treasures—all these belong to His only begotten Son, and to all who are one with Him in faith and love. It was of those who had been baptized that John writes (1 Ep: iii. 10), “In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

Never, never be satisfied till you have the witness of the Spirit drawing your heart heavenward, and the witness of a holy, loving, Christ-like life that you are indeed a son of the living God.

## IV.

*THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS.*

"They glorified God in me."—*Gal. i. 24.*

WELL might the early Christians glorify God for the mighty change wrought in this proud persecutor of the faith. A young man's conversion turned the world upside down. We find him first at the martyrdom of Stephen, one of the fiercest and most forward of his enemies. But Stephen prays and Stephen falls asleep, and from his prayer and death arises one far greater than himself, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, one who for thirty years carried the Gospel message far and wide, and whose Epistles are for all ages the treasure of the Christian Church.

We see Saul on his way to Damascus, with horsemen and soldiers, to do his deadly work. Full of bitter hatred against the name of Jesus of Nazareth and those who bore it, he thought to do God service by rooting it out from the earth. Never was heart more set against Christ and His truth. No Jew of the present day, no bigoted Hindoo, or proud

Mahometan glorying in the false prophet, was ever more determined in his opposition to the kingdom of the Crucified.

And within the city we may well believe the little flock of Christ were trembling and affrighted. "How shall we withstand the shock of his onslaught upon us?" "How shall we be able to bear the loss of all things, exile, imprisonment, death?" "The enemy is near, but what means can we devise to resist the attack?"

They had but one. No carnal weapons were in their hands. No soldier or human defence was within their reach to protect them. But they could pray. And pray no doubt they did. Fervent, believing, redoubled petitions would ascend night and day from the company of feeble Christians; and their prayer, as that of Stephen, had power with God. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

Saul draws nigh to Damascus, still breathing out slaughter and threatening against the disciples. But now comes a sudden arrest. It is noonday. The brilliant eastern sun shines forth in all its power. But lo! a light brighter still. And a mighty voice is heard. It is a moment of confusion. Some see the light, but know not its meaning. Some hear a voice, yet discover not its purport. To one only the message comes. "To which of all us?" would they ask. "To thee, O captain!" is the reply. To thee, the head of the persecuting band. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest

thou Me?" "But who art Thou, Thou bright and glorious One, that mine eyes can scarce behold Thee?" "I am thy Redeemer, thy Saviour, the despised Jesus the Nazarene, whose name thou hast blasphemed, yea, and made others to blaspheme likewise. Yea, Saul; thou hast thought to persecute a few poor, contemptible Christians, but I tell thee, thou art fighting against Me thy Lord, thy King. Ah, be not so mad! Shall the ox kick against the goad? What shall he gain but bruises and wounds? And what will be thy reward if thou contendest with Me, who hath all power both in heaven and earth?"

There is no further delay. There comes immediate surrender. The mighty fortress of Mansoul is yielded up to its lawful King. The Spirit of God goes with the Saviour's call, and now all is changed. The walls of the city fall down flat. The pride, the envy, the prejudice, the self-glorying—all is gone. Humbled in the dust, the whole man is given up to Christ. "LORD!" O Lord, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over me, but henceforth I am thine! Thou art my Lord, my Master, my King! Only tell me Thy will and it shall be done, and done with all my heart! "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

And now a touching sight is before our eyes. Along the magnificent Colonnade, amidst those rows of pillars by which he must enter the city, he is led

by the hand as a little child, for by the sight of the glorified Saviour he has become blind for a season. Not now the fierce monarch of the forest, the lion seeking after his prey, but the gentle lamb;—not now the judge, the persecutor, full of mad fury against the little flock, but the Lord's prisoner, a prisoner of hope. So for three days he abides: in darkness, and yet the light bursting into his soul and dispelling the blindness of years. Who can tell what those three days must have been? Must they not have been three years and more in his own experience? What grief must have filled his soul in the recollection of Stephen's death and of each act of cruelty towards the disciples! What new views of the character and claims of God's law! What deepening views of his own exceeding sinfulness must have laid him in the very dust!

At length those three days of darkness are passed. A disciple of Damascus baptizes him who is to carry the olive branch of peace to Jew and Gentile. Thence begins that glorious course of ministry and suffering by which for so many years he glorified God.

Two practical lessons I would ask you to carry away. . . .

(1.) Bear in mind that zeal and earnestness are no substitute for the truth of the Gospel. Now-a-days men make an idol of earnestness. It matters not what views a man holds, he may be a teacher of Romish error or of a half-infidel philosophy, he

may propagate the most unscriptural doctrines, yet if only he is in earnest, he is not to be blamed. Look at Saul of Tarsus. He was earnest enough, he was zealous enough; yet on looking back he was full of sorrow, and called himself "a blasphemer and injurious."

Error and misbelief and unbelief are just as perilous now as then, even though joined with great zeal. The express train may do capital service whilst it keeps on the line, but if it leave the line the quicker it is going the more injury it will do. It is thus with a zealous spirit. If it keep to the lines of Scripture truth it will be of immense value, but if it turn aside in any direction, the more force and steam, the more deadly harm it will work.

Never, my young friend, part with truth because of the earnestness of him who teaches some other doctrine and some other Gospel. It is the truth which saves and the truth which sanctifies, and woe be to him who for any reason forsakes and turns from it!

(2.) The other lesson I should like you to remember is *the mighty influence one young man may exercise in the Church and in the world*. From the moment that Saul was converted to the faith of Christ he became a power for good which to this day is reaching myriads of souls. And why may not something of the same kind be true of you? You may not be an apostle, you may not be a minister in

Christ's Church, but if you have received Christ and are living for him, none can tell the increasing power you may be in your generation. Your influence may go on spreading and increasing as long as you live. In twenty or thirty years' time, if you abide faithful in Christ, you may find yourself the centre of a work for God of which at present you can form no idea.

*Believe in the power of individual workers in the Lord's vineyard.* Combinations of Christians for good objects, our great and noble societies for the work of God at home and abroad, are invaluable; but it is the individual workers, men and women filled with the Spirit, working in faith and with a single eye, that do the real and lasting work. God has a niche for you, and a very blessed one, in His Church, if only you are fitted to occupy it. Therefore yield yourself to Him. Ask Him to make you a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for His use. Ask Him to cleanse you from past evil and to endue you with knowledge and wisdom, humility and love in the Spirit. God was abundantly glorified in a young man of eighteen centuries ago, and He will be abundantly glorified in you. Then shall come the rich reward, a bright crown of glory that fadeth not away.

V.

*THE CURSE REMOVED.*

"There shall be no more curse."—*Rev. xxii. 3.*

I REMEMBER years ago having a letter from a young friend who was trying to do all the good in her power. She was striving day and night to lessen the sin and misery in the world, and to add to the peace and happiness of those around her. Then she summed up her desires in a short prayer. It was this (from a hymn of Horatius Bonar):—

"Come, Lord, and wipe away  
The curse, the sin, the stain ;  
And make this blighted world of ours  
Thine own fair world again."

Thank God, such desires and prayers shall be fulfilled. As we come near to the close of the Revelation the promise stands out very distinctly. In the City of the Living God there shall be the tree of life with its varying fruits, and the river of life, and the throne of God and of the Lamb, and here in one sentence seems almost a summary of all, "*There shall be no more curse.*"

For what a sad history our world has had hitherto ! Ever since the tempter set his foot on earth all the fair beauty and glory that pertained to man have well-nigh utterly perished. Cursed is the ground for his sake. Thorns and thistles spring up apace, and far worse, man himself becomes as a thorn or a briar instead of the myrtle or the fir-tree to adorn the paradise of God. The love of God is changed into fear and dread. Hatred and envy and evil passions of all kinds stir him up to violence, cruelty, and murder. The image of God is lost. Ten thousand foul sins and vices burst forth and turn earth into a hell. Brother slaying brother, jealousy, suspicion, selfishness taking the lead and bringing misery and confusion into all the relationships of life. And the soul of man, once the palace of the King of Love, becomes the cage and dwelling-place of unclean spirits. Oh the terrible weight of the curse which since the Fall has rested on man ! Oh the woe and the wickedness which have blighted that which was once holy and fair and beautiful ! "The crown has fallen from our head ; woe unto us that we have sinned ! "

This curse, my young brother, has touched both you and me. It may be that sin is not yet fully developed. You may never have fallen into the deep mire as some have done. And therefore you may hitherto have escaped the exceeding bitterness which even here often follows its commission. Nevertheless, wherever there is sin, there is a curse

till it be removed by grace. And who dare say—  
“ I have no sin, and I have never sinned ? ”

But there is One who can lift off the curse, and give in its place a blessing far greater than Adam possessed at first. And why is this ? Because He Himself bore on the cross the penalty and the curse and the death that sin merited, and now He gives in its place an everlasting and unchanging blessing.

Think of this. Christ offers to remove at once whatever guilt you have incurred, to restore to you the favour and love of God, and to bring you safely through shoals of temptation to an inheritance of life and glory. Come by faith and accept the offer. Tell the Saviour that you believe His love and look to Him for pardon, peace, and life. Then live in the bright hope of His appearing, and let love to God and love to man be the health-giving atmosphere which you constantly breathe.

“ Faith circles round the Cross :  
Hope circles round the coming :  
Love fills up the little while between.”

Then look on, “ There shall be no more curse.” There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. God shall wipe away all tears from men’s eyes. Sorrow and suffering, pain and death, shall no longer burden the earth.

True, even then there is a dark background, for

where the glory is revealed most fully we have no doubtful statements as to the final condition of those who have rejected Christ. (Rev. xx. 15, xxi. 8, xxii. 11, 15.) Yet sin and evil shall be no longer rampant. The rightful King shall hold the reins, and all His judgments shall be manifested to be true and righteous and holy.

"There shall be no more curse." Are you helping forward this blessed consummation? Are you doing what God may enable you to roll away something of the evil that overspreads the world? Is your daily life attractive for good? Is your influence always on the side of truth, godliness, and unselfish kindness? Is there an effort, when there is need, to put away a stumbling-block out of another's path? Who can tell how much may be done by a single word or prayer in forwarding the kingdom of Christ? It has been truly said—"Every one, whether he will or no, is a finger-post to hell, or a beacon-light to heaven."

Let me give a true example of one who was the latter.

A Scotch gentleman, who for twenty years had professed infidel views, settled in the Southern States of America and had many slaves. One of these he treated very cruelly, and on one occasion had ordered to be severely beaten without any sufficient cause. The same night the master passed the cabin where this man dwelt, and heard his

voice—" *O God, bless poor massa ; shew him mercy that he may be merciful ; make him holy that he may be happy.*" He was riveted and solemnised by the prayer of his slave. He saw there was a reality and power in Christianity. He began to study the evidences of its truth, and became a true Christian, a clergyman, and a bishop of the American Episcopal Church, and after long and fruitful labours went to his rest.

If one single godly prayer or action may bear fruit like this, what may be the fruit of a life given to good works ? Only prove it. " Great shall be your reward in heaven."

## VI.

*THE FIRST PROMISE.*

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—*Gen. iii. 15.*

IT is a great confirmation of the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures to find the evident traces of them in the early traditions of heathen lands. There is a very striking one touching on this earliest prophecy of the work of Christ. I have seen two idols from India, both representing the same god, but under opposite conditions. Here is "Krishna Suffering"—serpents twining themselves around his limbs, and he for the moment unable to cast them off. Here again is "Krishna Triumphant"—the serpent's head trampled beneath his foot. Can there be a doubt that in some way this double view of Krishna had a reference to the old promise of "the seed of the woman," and may thus confirm our faith in the great lesson that it teaches ?

The meaning of the words can scarcely be doubt-

ful, if we read them in the light of the New Testament. Christ speaks of His disciples "treading on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy;" Paul writes to the Romans, "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" and in the Apocalypse the devil is described as the great dragon, "*the old serpent*," which deceiveth the whole world.

So the meaning of the old prophecy is clear—there shall be perpetual enmity between Christ and Satan. Through the power of the Evil One, Christ and His spiritual seed shall suffer great tribulation and persecution; but on Christ's side there shall be victory. The principalities and powers of darkness shall be trodden down, and Christ and His Church shall have the dominion for evermore.

To trace the historical fulfilment of this promise from the beginning gives a magnificent view of the progress of Christ's kingdom. It takes in the growth of the Church from the earliest days. From Abel to John the Baptist not a saint ever lived and died in faith but it was in the strength of Him who should come as the woman's seed. It takes in the Redeemer's birth, when He came to destroy the works of the devil and to set the prisoner free. It was fulfilled in Christ's threefold victory over the tempter in the wilderness; in His casting out devils; in His death, by which He spoiled principalities and powers; in His glorious resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father; and ever since He ascended, every soul plucked out of the hand of the

wicked one, and brought into subjection to the Crucified, has been in virtue of this promise.

But there is "more to follow." The promise looks on to a greater fulfilment than any yet manifested. The power of Christ shall be made plain all through the wide universe. Every form of sin, unbelief, error, and false worship shall be cast down for ever. But more than this. On account of the evil that has so fiercely contended with the reign of Christ, He shall be the more exalted and glorified. All shall pay tribute to Him. Then at length shall the last enemy, death itself, be put beneath the Conqueror's feet.

But there is a personal aspect of this promise I should like you to consider.

An old Moravian missionary, past eighty years of age, was passing to his rest. For more than half a century he had followed Christ and had been about His work. In far-off lands he had lifted up the banner of His saving name, and now he was going home. To use the language of another aged Christian, he had long been an *outdoor* servant of the Lord Jesus, but now his work was to lie *indoors*. Before his death he was asked of his hope. "I do believe," said the old Christian, "that the seed of the woman has bruised in me the serpent's head."

Has this been so with you? In Eden we trace distinctly four marks of the serpent's work. *Doubt, pride, disobedience, separation* — all followed the

tempter's presence. How is it with these sore evils in yourself? Are they in full vigour? Or are they crushed by the power of Christ? In place of doubt is there faith in the great Redeemer? Are pride and self-will cast down, and is humility found in their place? Are you striving cheerfully to obey all the Lord's precepts? Is the old dread and separation gone, so that you are near to God as a reconciled child in Christ? Or, at least, are you conscious of these evils, and is it your prayer to overcome them? Is this stanza of our Christmas hymn the petition that you could really offer with earnest desire—

“Rise, the woman's conquering seed,  
Bruise in *me* the serpent's head;  
Adam's likeness now efface,  
Stamp Thine image in its place!”

If you would share Christ's kingdom, you must be a conqueror. And through Him the weakest may triumph over every foe. No better prayer for this can be found than that of our Litany: “That it may please Thee to strengthen such as do stand, to comfort and help the weak-hearted, to raise up them that fall, and finally to beat down Satan under our feet.”

## VII.

*A WORD OF COUNSEL.*

"Give me thine hand."—*2 Kings x. 15.*

THERE is a distinction to be made between true and false zeal. There may be a zeal that is false and hollow, the fruit of natural energy rather than of Divine grace. It may be zeal for self rather than for God. It may strive to do that which lies in the line of inclination, but refuses to regard all the precepts of the Word. Look at Jehu. He had a strong hand and a strong will, and whatever he did, he did with all his heart. He would perform in one day what many men would scarcely have done in seven. When commanded of God to execute judgment upon the house of Ahab, and the Baal worshippers of Israel, he was not slack to do it. It was a task that suited him, and he did it well. He utterly destroyed the whole family of Ahab, and all the priests and worshippers of Baal.

It was in this latter work that he spoke the words at the head of this chapter. Meeting Jehonadab he accosted him. He asked him if his heart was

with him in the work he had in hand. "If it be, give me thine hand." Then he took him into his chariot, and bade him come and see his "zeal for the Lord." He thought he was doing great things, and gloried in it. But there were dead flies in the ointment. His zeal soon died out, and he took no heed to keep God's commandments. He provoked God by his sins, and by-and-by judgment came upon his house as it had done upon that of Ahab before him.

But we will leave Jehu and gather up a lesson or two from this word that he spoke to Jehonadab, "Give me thine hand!"

Learn here the duty of giving help where we can. It is a capital thing for a lad to lend a helping hand where it is possible. The palsied man was carried by his four friends into the presence of Jesus, and the Lord commended their faith and perseverance. The boatmen on the lake came and helped their friends whose strength was overtaxed by the draught of fishes.

Let it be your desire to walk in the same path. Think of others, their needs and sorrows, and it will bring joy into your own bosom. You will bear the burdens of others, and so fulfil the law of Christ. In this way too you will kill selfishness, which is one of the worst enemies with which we have to fight.

Keep on the look-out and see what doors God opens to you. You may help a little child across a stream, or pick him up when he has fallen. You

may lend or give a Christian book to one in sickness or in trouble. You may carry a parcel for some one who is weary and footsore. You may lessen a mother's care or anxiety by your thoughtfulness. You may hold up in the right path some one whose foot is slipping, and may thus save a soul from perishing.

“O strengthen me that while I stand  
Firm on the rock and strong in Thee,  
I may stretch out a loving hand  
To wrestlers with the troubled sea.”

“Give me thine hand!”

Here is a call to unity and brotherliness. Clasped hands are an emblem of love and fellowship. A young man who went abroad left at home a mother who dearly loved him. So he sent her a ring, and on the front were two hands clasped. But the ring opened, and underneath the clasped hands were two hearts joined together.

Cultivate unity in the home. Nothing is more blessed than a home where father and mother, brothers and sisters, are loving and gentle and forbearing, and are all welded together like stones in a building, or as the branches of a tree are all one with the stem and the root. So, too, we need to cultivate unity amongst various classes in a country. “I never knew a strike that did any good, except a strike against sin and the devil.” It is true. Strikes and strifes, division and class feeling, and separation between rich and poor, employer and

employed, landlord and tenant—all this is a terrible curse, and sooner or later does mischief all round.

Never forget that there is only one true bond of unity. It is the knowledge and love of God. The French talked of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity!” and then raised the guillotine and slew each other by scores and hundreds. Ah! they had left one word out. They ought to have put first “Paternity!” for if the Fatherhood of God had been the basis of their edifice, they would have learnt the secret of true brotherly love and unity. Do something in this direction. Promote a spirit of peace and love, and let the love of God make you forbearing and forgiving toward all men. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

*“Give me thine hand!”*

Take this as a call to faith in Christ. Your Saviour comes to you. He knows all your waywardness and wrong-doings. He may know that up to this hour you have never cared to love or please Him. But He comes and holds out to you the hand once pierced for your sin. He offers to you His friendship, His faithful loving-kindness, and His daily help. He would say to you, “Son, I have preserved thee all thy days, and have followed thee in mercy and goodness. I know every sin thou hast committed, and every evil thought thou hast ever harboured in thy breast; but, in spite of all, I love thee and am willing to forgive all that is past. Wilt thou

accept My friendship, My favour, My grace ? Wilt thou take Me as the Guide of thy youth, and the Friend above all friends ? ‘*Give Me thy hand !*’ Give it not to sin ; it will bring thee nought but shame, and misery, and death. Give it not to the world ; it will bring thee only unrest and disappointment. Give it to Me, thy Saviour, thy King, thy Redeemer !”

What do you say ?

“*Yea, Lord, with all my heart I give Thee my hand.*”

## VIII.

*HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION.*

"Then the devil leaveth Him; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."—*Matt. iv. 11.*

THE narrative of Christ's conflict with the tempter stands out in marvellous contrast with Adam's fall in Paradise. Adam was in a garden surrounded by all that was pleasant, with food enough and to spare. Christ was in a wilderness, fasting forty days and afterward an hungered. Adam was tempted but once, yet he fell. Christ was thrice assaulted, yet He stood firm. Adam shows us that man's unaided strength is but weakness. Christ shows us how the soul, leaning upon God, can triumph over the enemy.

"But how can I triumph?" you may ask. In one form or another few have more temptations than lads at school, yet by God's help you may pass unscathed through all. Let me give you a few hints how you may do so.

I. *You must recognise the reality of Satan's power to tempt.* He is a real foe, and one whom you must be prepared to face. Have you ever noticed

how often Christ spoke of his deadly work? He tells how, like a secret foe, he comes by night and sows tares among the wheat. He tells how He foresaw him coming to sift Simon and try him. He tells how, as the prince of the world, he came to Himself, but could find no foothold for his temptations. O be watchful to mark his approach! Strong as a lion, crafty as a serpent, invisible, yet ever hovering near, he is always on the look-out to beguile and enthrall the soul. Never is he more successful than when men deny his very being. "My soul, be thou ever on thy guard." If he thrice strove to overthrow the Master will he let the servant alone? None will he more strive to injure than yourself. If he can ruin the peace and destroy the usefulness of a young life, great will be his gain.

*II. You must be swift to discern temptation in whatever form it may come to you.* These thousands of years he has been practising his fatal arts in beguiling souls, so that he knows how best to reach those whom he would injure. Just as a thief would go round about a house to see by what window or door he best can enter, so the devil goes round about each soul to discover where he can find the easiest access. Remember, no place is secure from danger. The wilderness, the mountain-top, the Holy City, the Temple, were scenes where he tempted Christ. So everywhere and anywheres he is on the watch for you. In solitude or in society, in your chamber or on the cricket-field, in the

schoolroom or in the chapel, he may come to you. And he has many devices to compass his work. If he can, he will draw you into sin, he will make you forget God, he will make you proud or careless, or perhaps try to make you despair of help. See how variously he tempted Christ. He would have Him doubt His sonship, distrust God's providential care, presume upon His protection though He should forsake the path marked out; he tempted Him to self-display, to grasp at the dominion over the world, to commit the fearful sin of worshipping him.

In these ways he tempted Christ, and in similar ways he will tempt you. He will tempt you to sins of the intellect, to self-conceit, parade of natural gifts, thinking lightly of God's truth. He will tempt you to sins of the appetite, to self-indulgence, to caring too much for eating and drinking, to self-abuse, and other sins. He will tempt you to sins of the heart, trusting in an arm of flesh, love of the world, ambition, craving too much human praise, and letting some idol take the throne which Christ alone ought to occupy. No one can tell the lanes and byways by which your enemy will come near. You need to be perpetually on the alert.

"Gird thy heavenly armour on,  
Wear it ever night and day,  
Ambushed lies the evil one.  
Watch and pray."

III. *You must learn from Christ to be well skilled in using the Word of Truth.* Five smooth stones did David take from the brook, and with one of them he overthrew Goliath. Three pebbles from the pure stream of God's Word did the Son of David take, and with them overcame the adversary. "It is written," was the unfailing answer of Christ to each assault of the tempter. If you would resist the evil one you must take the same course. Search into the Word of God, and apply it to your own special needs. Gather up its precepts and promises, and then in the power of the Spirit direct them against every temptation, small or great.

Three great truths Christ used to repel temptation, and they are valuable and helpful for all time.

Man's true life is in God. It depends not on external things. It is maintained by Divine power, and fed by Divine truth (Matt. iv. 4).

Man must not tempt God by forsaking the plain path of duty. If you would be safe, turn not one hair's-breadth from the way of God's commandments (ver. 7).

Worship God, and Him alone. None else must claim your homage. Though the whole world were your reward, not for one moment let your heart turn away from Him (ver. 10).

These thoughts may help you, but you want the teaching of the whole Scripture. Every part is profitable, and none you must neglect. Read its histories, and see how God honours those who

honour Him. Prize the Psalms, and catch the rare spirit of devotion that breathes in them. Value the prophetic books, and hearken to the solemn appeals in which they abound. Dive deeper into the New Testament, and grasp with firmer faith its revelations of mercy, peace, grace, and holiness.

But with the Word look for the Spirit to bring it home to you. It was when Christ was full of the Holy Ghost that He so bravely withstood the prince of darkness.

He was full of the Holy Ghost when He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. It was in the power of the Spirit that He returned into Galilee. All through the temptation it was by the Spirit that He foiled the tempter by the sword which He had forged. So must you overcome. Pray for the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, live in the Spirit.

“ Mighty Spirit, dwell with me ;  
I myself would mighty be ;  
Mighty so as to prevail  
Where unaided man must fail ;  
Ever by a mighty hope  
Pressing on and bearing up.”

## IX.

*VICTORY IN THE BATTLE.*

"For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."—*Heb. ii. 18.*

IT is a great mistake in warfare to underrate the power of the enemy. Many an army has been worsted and a campaign rendered useless by this error. Sufficient forces have not been sent, or sufficient care taken to meet the attacks or the stratagems of the foe. Let it not be thus with you in your Christian course. Be prepared for great temptations, nor be surprised when they overtake you. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers." You strive with an unwearyed foe. Though he fail to-day, a still more daring attack he may make to-morrow.

But if you may not underrate the power of the enemy, neither may you limit or question the mighty aid by which you may resist him.

The very weakest Christian has Almighty power on his side. Christ is with us and for us, and all power is in His hand. Moreover, Satan is a conquered foe, and in Christ's victory we have a pledge of our own. The adversary tried his utmost to

turn Christ aside, but he could not; and as our Head overcame, so shall every one of His members. Let us remember that He sympathises with each tempted soul—

“He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For He has felt the same.”

Be sure that He will not scorn nor despise you because evil thoughts trouble you. He will not cast you off because temptation has been too strong for you. In yourself there may be fear and trembling, and you may have to pass through many a painful struggle, but in Him you may ever find mercy, and might, and unchanging faithfulness. And if you will but trust in Him you will find Him very near to you.

I learnt once a precious lesson of faith from a little girl. I was walking along a road in my parish, and I saw a little girl walking by my side. I saw she was not a poor child seeking relief, so I wondered what she wanted. After a few moments I bent down and asked her if I could do anything for her; but I only heard a sob. Soon I tried again, and, after a little delay, I just heard the words, “Rough men!”—“So frightened!” I looked round and saw some navvies returning from their work, and I fancy they were not very sober, and had been fighting or quarrelling along the way; so I took hold of the child’s hand, and inquiring where she lived, I took her to the gate and saw

the little woman cheerfully run up the garden and enter the house.

It seemed to me just a type and picture of the way in which a Christian should act in temptation. Go near to Christ, and put confidence in Him. Go and nestle by His side and under His wing, and remember that He cares for you, and will go with you and protect you. Take hold of His hand and tell Him your trouble, and look to Him to go with you every step of your homeward journey. And He will do it. He won't reject your humble suit. He won't turn away from you and leave you; oh no! He delights in those who flee to Him and trust in Him, and He will keep them from their fears and dangers, and bring them to the Father's house in peace.

My young brother, in all your temptations and difficulties believe that the Lord Jesus is close by you, and look to Him to undertake for you. Believe His presence to be a great reality. You cannot see Him, but He can see you, and uphold and strengthen you in ways you cannot discern. He can discover to you the danger that may be approaching, as He warned Peter that Satan was about to try Him. He can pre-occupy your thoughts with that which is good, so as to keep out the evil imaginations that arise. He can give you a firm purpose and will to trample down some bait and enticement of the enemy. He can keep you steadfast day by day even to the end. And He can

do more than this. By the very temptations you meet with He can give you increasing humility and faith, and thus draw you nearer to Himself.

Still more than this will He do for you. Through temptation He will lead you to deeper joy and comfort. He will enlarge the vessel, and then fill it to overflowing out of His fulness. After the storm there shall be a calm, and with the calm fresh tokens of a Father's love.

See how it was with Christ Himself. Consolation followed conflict. The devil left Him, and angels came to Him. The bread He refused at the hands of Satan was brought to Him by ministering spirits.

Thus shall it be with you. If you are really in earnest in serving God, you may look for a sore battle now and then. Christian had a fight with Apollyon, and Apollyon is not yet either dead or in chains. You may at times have darkness and soul-trouble and wrestlings with the adversary, but friendly aid is not far off. Angels are on the wing. The present lack shall have a rich supply, and, before long, you will share with the celestial host the glory of the Father's house.

“ So help me, Lord, Thy holy will to suffer,  
And still a learner at Thy feet to be ;  
Give faith and patience when the way is rougher,  
And at the end a joyful victory :  
Then grief itself is changed to song,  
Ofttimes on earth, but evermore ere long.”

## X.

*THE RIGHT PLATFORM.*

"There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."—*Rom. iii. 22, 23* (Revised Version).

THE truth here laid down is of immense moment to such as desire solid, abiding peace, and a sure hope of everlasting life. You must take your right position if you wish to journey in the right direction. An illustration of this might be found in the Willesden Station, which is so largely used in reaching various parts of the metropolis. Whatever be your destination you have to be most careful in one point. Whether you are going to Victoria or Broad Street, or Hampstead, or elsewhere, you must take care *to get on the right platform for that particular station*, and before very long the train will draw up to it, and you enter, and by-and-by you find yourself at the station to which you are bound.

It is the same with those who wish to reach the home of God's saints. You must be very careful to be *on the right platform*, and then the train of God's free salvation will take you up and carry you safe to glory.

But what is this platform? What is the position which every man must take who wishes to be saved? There is no doubt or uncertainty about it. Very plainly does Paul tell us in his Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere. It is the platform of self-condemnation. It is the laying aside every self-righteous, self-excusing plea, and the taking the place of a sinner, a law-breaker, in the sight of God. The law speaks for this purpose—"that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19). The foundation of God's plan of redemption rests on this fact, that the whole race of mankind have broken His law, and all alike, without distinction, are deserving of death for their transgressions. "There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The old version, "*There is no difference,*" scarcely put this truth so clearly as the new. There is a difference, a very wide difference, between one and another. There is a difference as to the measure of responsibility, in regard to the light possessed and the privileges vouchsafed. There is a difference as to the amount of guilt, the direct and wilful violation of God's law, the length of time in which sin has been practised, the influence exerted for the injury of others; and all these must weigh in the balance with Him whose dealings are all in equity and truth. Great is the difference between one in a Christian land like England and

one like the poor Arabs in the Soudan who have never known the light of the Gospel. Great is the difference between a young person yielding for the first time to some subtle temptation, and the hoary-headed sinner who each year had reached a lower level of evil, and who with seared conscience and hardened heart has been a cause of stumbling to multitudes.

But in spite of these differences, in one important point "there is no distinction." There is not one that has kept the law. There is not one but has sinned, and thus failed of the glory of God. The expression in Rom. iii. 23, "fall short of the glory of God," suggests a thought that may help us to see the truth here revealed. A match in archery is to take place, and none shall win but he who touches the eye of the target. Many try their skill, and some come nearer than others. The concentric rings are hit by one arrow or another, but the only matter of importance is whether any one actually touches the eye. If otherwise, all alike fail.

In the matter before us perfect holiness, perfect and constant obedience in word, thought, and deed, and that out of a pure and perfect heart, is the end of God's law. But who has reached it? No doubt some may come nearer than others, but where is one who has never failed? Not one can be found except our great Pattern the Lord Jesus Christ. All we, the rest, have sinned and come

short of it. Far too corrupt are we by nature and prone to evil to approach anywhere near the perfection which the law demands.

I want you honestly to own this, and recognise it before God. Do not try to put in any claim of your own for arrest of judgment. Do not try to lull conscience to sleep by imagining you are not so bad as others, or that you have done many things which are right, or that you have at times some good feelings or intentions. All these are of no avail in meeting the claims of God's law. If you had lived for twenty years a sinless life, and then had cherished one wicked thought, the law pronounces you guilty. But instead of this, is there one single day or hour in your whole life which you could present to God as being stainless, without blemish, and guided entirely by the right motive of supreme love to Him?

Therefore learn the lesson. You must stoop and take the lowest place. By the grace and guidance of the Holy Ghost, you must confess yourself to be a sinner deserving to die. You must condemn yourself, and be willing to be saved on the same footing as a criminal—yea, even as a murderer. "God, be merciful to me a sinner" must be your only plea. When you come to this, there is at once a wide door of hope opened to you; there a free, sure, complete forgiveness offered to you in Christ's name. There is no need of delay, and no danger of rejection. Come at once to the

Lord Jesus, and He will receive you and put away the sin of the past. Twelve, fourteen, sixteen years of sin and forgetfulness may be pardoned this very hour through faith in Christ's blood.

Look at the words closely connected with the passage of Scripture on which I have touched. On both sides, before and after, it is linked with the free redemption which comes through Christ. See verses 21 and 22, which tell of "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Thank God for this glorious gift of a sheltering righteousness which hides from the eye of Divine Justice every spot and every stain! So again in ver. 24, "*Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.*" No distinction! All who confess their sin and accept the righteousness of God's providing stand free from guilt, without blame before the Majesty of Heaven, righteous in Him who is "Jehovah-Tzidkenu"—"The Lord our Righteousness."

"Mine is the sin, but Thine the righteousness ;  
Mine is the guilt, but Thine the cleansing blood.  
Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace,  
Thy blood, Thy righteousness, O Lord, my God."

## XI.

*NOT OF THE WORLD.*

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."  
 —*John xvii. 16.*

You must not pass by these words and reckon them of small moment. They speak of a separation that is essential. Three times on the same night before His betrayal did our Lord repeat them. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (*John xv. 19*: so also *xvii. 14-16*).

An excellent illustration has been given of this separation.

Amongst the currents in the Atlantic Ocean is the great Gulf Stream. In parts it is sixty miles wide, and has been called a river in the ocean. The waters in this stream are, on the average, twenty degrees higher in temperature than the surrounding waters; it preserves its waters distinct from those of the sea on either side, so that the eye can trace the line of contact. It retains its physical identity for thou-

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sands of miles, casting branches and fruits of tropical trees on the coasts of the Hebrides and of Norway. It has an immense influence in moderating the extreme cold of winter in this latter country and elsewhere. All around the coast where its influence is felt the atmosphere is many degrees of temperature higher than in the interior. Moreover, it prevents stagnation, and keeps one-fourth part of the waters of the Atlantic in constant motion.

In many ways the Christian is like this Gulf Stream.

Like the stream in the ocean, he is in the world, but yet distinct and separate. He is not conformed to it. He has a higher temperature; for the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. Look at the great Pattern which he is bound to follow. Christ was no ascetic. He was in contact with the world at all points. He went into the house of publican and of Pharisee. He mingled with men in the streets, on the mountain side, on the sea-shore. Yet there was a holy elevation, a heavenliness, a living above the world whilst He was in it. So must you be if you are His follower. You must not forsake the path of common life. You must not shut yourself up in the cell of a monk, or imagine that you have nothing to do with the world to which God sends you. But whilst you are in the world, let your spirit rise above it. Through the indwelling presence of the Lord Jesus live a new and heavenly life. Let your eye be

upward to a Father in heaven, and your hand engaged in doing His work. Like the stream to which I refer, remember you have a mighty influence, and it is always for good if you are living after the mind of the Lord Jesus. You keep the world from the stagnation of death by your efforts for the spiritual and temporal well-being of those around you. You stir up others to a healthy activity by your own zeal for God.

Moreover, as the warmth of the Stream lessens the intense cold felt in northern climes, so the true Christian, by his own holy life, raises the standard of morality and truth, and thus lessens the sin which is around him. Still further, he often brings the fruits and flowers of Paradise to the neighbourhood where he dwells. In his own daily walk, and in the example of a godly home, ordered in the fear and love of God, the heavenly graces and virtues of meekness, forbearance, self-denial, gentleness, love, patience, and the like shine forth, and testify by their fragrance of the country from whence they derive their origin.

Now bring home the question to yourself—Is this your life? Is there something about you higher and nobler and more Christ-like than in the most? Is there in you a hope and a power that lifts you above the low, earthly life that satisfies the majority? Is there at least a glimmer of the bright light that shone forth in all Christ said and did? Is there a distinctness of purpose about you

that gives others an impression that you have a motive and a principle which they do not possess ? Is your daily conduct a real benefit to others, by showing them their sin, and manifesting the beauty of holy living ?

Perhaps not. But if not, what then ? Will you rest content ? Will you please yourself, and forget the claims that Christ has upon you ? Will you throw away the privilege you might possess of scattering blessings around you, and having in yourself the testimony of God's favour ?

There is but one way to obtain it. Receive by faith the benefit of Christ's sacrifice, and yield yourself to Him to be filled with His Spirit and grace ; then His life will be your life, and in His life you shall live for God.

## XII.

*WHERE IS THE FRUIT?*

"He found nothing but leaves."—*Mark xi. 13.*

OUR Lord was on His way to the city. He had now but a short season before the end; so, early and late, He must be doing His Father's will, and fulfilling His great mission. It was early in the morning, and, probably without tasting food, He had left the kindly shelter of Bethany. So now He is hungry, and seeing a fig-tree covered with leaves, He sought fruit thereon. He goes to the tree and turns over its broad leaves to see if at least a few figs might not be discovered. But it is in vain. True, we are told that the season was not yet; but if there were leaves, there might be fruit also, for usually the latter preceded the former. In any wise, our Lord teaches a very solemn lesson from the lack He found.

He never wrought a miracle of judgment on a single human being, and He never wrought but one, and it was on this tree. Only one short sentence was it; but this was enough: "No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever" (ver. 14). So

it came to pass. The fig-tree is dried up from the roots. No fruit henceforth can possibly grow upon it, and all its fair covering of leaves no more is seen. It immediately withers away, and is fit for nought but to be cut down and committed to the flames.

The one point on which I wish to dwell is the Master's search for fruit amongst the leaves of this fig-tree. Leaf after leaf He may have turned over, but beneath each and all He found nothing to satisfy Him.

How is it with yourself? Look upon the leaf as an emblem of a promise or profession of Christian living, and see if there be not yourself something of a parallel with the tree of which I am speaking.

Perhaps before coming to school you had kind and earnest words spoken to you as to the dangers you must avoid and the course you should follow. Words of caution bade you keep aloof from companions who would rob you of your value for truth and godliness. Counsel was added as to daily prayer, and courage to do right, and diligence in study. And you sincerely promised to keep to the straight path, and to use well these days of great opportunity.

*Here was the leaf, but where is the fruit?* What does the Master find in you corresponding to your purpose and promise? He looks over your life in the dormitory, in the schoolroom, in the cricket-field, in your school-chapel, and does He find you striving to do your best, to keep a good conscience,

to shun evil, to set a Christian example, and to exercise an influence that may be helpful to those around you ?

Or look at this in another way. I suppose week by week you go at least once or twice to the service in your chapel, or, it may be, in the Parish church. You join in the prayers that are offered up. You take up the words of the General Confession : " We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. . . . We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us."

*Here is the leaf, but where is the fruit ?* You confess you have done amiss. You utter words of repentance and humiliation. You speak as one poor in spirit, and deeply conscious of your sinfulness. But where is the reality of all this ? Do you grieve when you fail in doing right ? Do you in secret humble yourself before God for sin ? Do you cherish a sense of your own unworthiness, and desire to amend your life ?

But think again. You frequently use the Lord's Prayer. In the family, at home, in church, and perhaps in your secret prayers you often repeat the words, " Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

*Here is the leaf, but where is the fruit?* You call God your Father, but have you the spirit of a loving and obedient child? You pray that God's name may be hallowed, but do you honour it in your conversation, in your reverence for His Word, His house, His day? You pray that His kingdom may come, but are you doing your part to advance it in your home, in your school, and wherever you have influence? You pray that God's will may be done, but are you making it your aim to do it by keeping His commandments, and, like the angels, cheerfully running in the path He points out?

You stand up and acknowledge the faith you hold. You say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord," &c.

*Here is the leaf, but where is the fruit?* Do you believe in God as your Creator, so that you reckon yourself entirely to be His and not your own? Do you believe in Jesus as your Saviour, so that you have in Him forgiveness and strength? Do you manifest your faith in Him by loving Him and serving Him day by day?

Once more, you take part in the General Thanksgiving. In your name at least the words are uttered: "We bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but, above all, for Thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ."

*Here is the leaf, but where is the fruit?* Do you

mingle true thanksgiving with the prayers you offer? Do you praise God by the holiness and cheerfulness of your life? Do you see something of the marvellous loving-kindness of God in the work of Christ, so that you would fain praise Him more and more?

Alas for him who has leaves and no fruit! You cannot deceive God. You cannot hide from Him the barrenness of a heart that neither repents, nor prays, nor loves, nor longs to serve Him. And remember the issue. You may bear fruit now, if you desire it; but by-and-by you cannot. You may quench the Spirit. You may provoke Him to withdraw from you His grace and help. You may lose every impression for good, all tenderness of conscience, and become "twice dead," as a tree in the vineyard withered and dried.

Let it not be so with you. The dresser of the vineyard still intercedes. He pleads for you that you may neither be left without grace nor be cut down in your sins. Therefore come to Him who can pardon past days of neglect and fruitlessness. Come to Him and abide in Him by faith, and you shall bear much fruit.

"Happy still in God confiding,  
*Fruitful if in Christ abiding;*  
Holy through the Spirit's guiding,  
All must be well."

## XIII.

*THE SMITTEN ROCK.*

"He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers."—*Ps. lxxviii. 15, 16.*

A SHORT time ago I saw a picture of the English forces in Egypt reaching the wells of Abu Klea. Their eagerness in drinking of the water reminded me of the scene when Moses struck the rock at God's bidding and the streams gushed out abundantly. Never did God more plainly display His mercy and forbearance. The people are full of murmuring and unbelief. Twice, thrice, yea, many times already had He delivered them from danger and supplied their wants. Just before, He had opened the windows of heaven, and given them food enough and to spare. But they will not trust Him. They have no water, and they declare that they shall die in the wilderness of thirst. But again God quenches their murmurings in the overflowings of His goodness. He gives them water out of the rock, not for a day, but for years. The stream follows them along their course. Thus He showed

Himself full of compassion. He forgave their iniquity, and supplied all their need.

But if in the smitten rock there was mercy to Israel, there was still more to ourselves. If mercy shone forth in the shadow, how much more in the substance to which it pointed!

Now imagine another scene. Since the supply of water in the desert fourteen hundred years had passed. It was the last day of the feast of tabernacles, when water was brought in a golden pitcher from the pool and poured out by the Temple in remembrance of the gift of water at Meribah. And Jesus stood amongst the assembled thousands, and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John vii. 37). As if He would say, "*You remember the streams gushing forth from the rock in the desert. But that rock pointed to Me. Your fathers drank of that water, and they thirsted again, and at last fell in the wilderness. But drink of the water I will give you, and you shall never thirst, but this water shall be in you a well springing up to life eternal*" (comp. ver. 38, and John iv. 13, 14).

"*That rock was Christ*" (1 Cor. x. 4). It was a type and emblem of Him. It pointed to Him as the source and spring of boundless grace and blessing. What a consolation is this, that amongst the changing circumstances of life we have a changeless Rock, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," to whom we shall never turn in vain! He is a strong, enduring Friend and Helper. Though

waves beat high, on this Rock you may stand, and they cannot touch you. Though the sun of temptation beat upon you, yet beneath the shadow of this Rock you may abide and cannot be harmed.

But from the rock *smitten by the rod of Moses* came forth the living stream. And it is from Christ, smitten and afflicted for our sake, receiving in Himself the terrible stroke and penalty of a broken law, that grace and mercy flow.

Christ, as our substitute and representative, bears in our stead the death and judgment we deserve. I remember hearing of a young lad at school who had an elder schoolfellow who showed him great kindness. The young lad often broke school rules and got into trouble with the master, but his friend shielded him when he could. On one occasion something had been done amiss, and the master called the offender to receive punishment at the desk. It was the little lad who had done it, but the other bade him sit still, and he would go up as if he were guilty and receive the stripes. In this way he showed his love, and took blame for evil of which he was innocent.

But who can tell the kindness and love of Christ toward us ? Who can tell how much He bore for our sake ? "He was wounded for our offences, and bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5).

But not only does Christ bear our sin, but from Him, the Crucified One, flows the river of living water.

You want happiness. You want a constant source of peace and comfort. Where can you find it? Only in Christ. You may try everything which life has to give; and it will give you many a cup of pleasure, many an hour of gratification, many a delight in the things around you: and as far as these things are innocent and lawful, enjoy them, and thank God for them. But the cup will often be empty, and the little brook dry up, and perhaps pain, and disappointment, and trouble come instead. All present things are like cisterns dug in the clay, of which we read in "The Land and the Book," that may hold a little water for a time, but when hot weather comes there is a crack, and the cistern is empty.

But through Jesus you may find lasting comfort. He will pour into your heart an assurance of His love. He will brighten your path when it is dark by giving you patience and hope. He will rejoice in your happiness and remove every hindrance to it, as He met the need of the marriage guests at Cana. He will teach you by His Spirit to find real help in prayer. He will give you power to overcome temptation, and endue you with the graces of meekness, holiness, and love.

Only stoop down and drink of the stream which runs close at your feet. Only be humble and see

that you are unworthy of His grace. Only believe that He died for you and that He loves you and will hear your prayer. Only ask Him to give you the living water and He cannot deny you.

“I hunger and I thirst ;  
Jesu my manna be ;  
Ye living waters burst  
Out of the Rock for me.

For still the desert lies  
My thirsting soul before ;  
O living waters rise  
Within me evermore.”

## XIV.

***THE CLAIMS OF THE RISEN REDEEMER.***

"Fear not; I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and of Hades."—*Rev. i. 17, 18* (Revised Version).

NEVER a darker night of sorrow, and fear, and doubt than the interval between our Lord's death and resurrection. The little flock was scattered. Their hopes seemed dashed to the ground. The arrow had pierced the soul of His mother. Peter was weeping bitterly. The Magdalene and her companions had no thought but of honouring the dead body of their Lord.

But the darkness lasted only for a short season. And never dawned a brighter or more glorious day than that when the Prince of Life arose from the tomb and dispelled for ever those black clouds of unbelief which for a season had so hidden from sight the promises He had left them and the grand future that was in store for His Church. He rose, and none could stay Him. The watch,

and the stone, and the seal cannot delay for one moment the fulfilment of His promise. To one and another and another He showed Himself, until on that first Easter Eve the disciples together heard His welcome voice telling of peace, and saw the hands and the feet which had been wounded for them.

And for us too the light shines, and the Living One reminds us that His life abides evermore, and that all the powers of death and of the unseen world are in His hand. No humble, believing soul need now be afraid. "Fear not," He saith, "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One."

But what claims has this risen, living, glorious Redeemer upon you? What does He ask of you by virtue of His resurrection?

First, *He has a claim on your unlimited, unbounded confidence.* If Christ had remained in Joseph's new tomb, then faith would have been vain, and our hope perished. But now that He has risen, and that the evidences of His resurrection are so clear, does He not ask that we shall trust Him utterly?

If there be those nigh at hand who would suggest doubts as to the truth of the Gospel, we may not hearken to them nor regard them. Christ has risen, therefore He is God's chosen Messiah. His word is Yea and Amen, for He is proved to be the faithful and true witness. He cannot be deceived, and He cannot deceive. Firm as a rock

abide every doctrine which He taught, every promise He gave, every threatening He uttered. Moreover, you may trust Him for free and perfect forgiveness of sins. The resurrection was God's seal on the all-sufficiency of His atoning work. The debt is paid, for the prisoner is set free. And the payment of that debt availed for all who by faith accept the ransom. Therefore trust in Him and be not afraid. Trust Him as the great Prophet whose words cannot fail. Trust Him as the Surety who has satisfied the justice of God's law on your behalf. Trust Him as the One who can trample down the world, the devil, death, and hell under your feet. Trust Him with full whole-hearted confidence, and so trusting you shall never be put to shame.

*Christ, as the risen Saviour, has a claim on your supreme and constant love.* For He rose again, to perpetuate and for ever manifest the love which brought Him to the cross. It was the same loving Saviour who spoke to Mary, and forgave Peter, and bore with the unbelief of Thomas, that the disciples had known in earlier days. He loved through life; He loved in death; He loved when He rose again; and He loves still at the Father's right hand. And does not this love of Christ demand our love, our warmest and most fervent love? Thank God, Jesus lives evermore to accept and honour and reciprocate the love that is poured out upon Him. He loved first; but it is no less true that when you return

His love, and manifest that love in joyful obedience, He delights to reveal His love more and more, and to be ever giving fresh tokens of its reality.

Therefore be it your glad privilege to recognise this claim of Christ. Set your love on Christ. Say with David, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength." Own to Him that you would love Him far more than ever you have done hitherto, and ask Him by His Spirit to pour His love abundantly into your heart. Ponder His marvellous life, His words of grace,—above all, the story of His death, until your heart is on fire with love to Him, until that love grows deeper and stronger, and pervades your whole soul. Such love blesses him who exercises it, and honours Him on whom it is bestowed.

Lastly, *Christ by virtue of His resurrection has a claim on your loyal and unswerving allegiance.* You are bound to fight bravely and steadfastly on behalf of His kingdom of righteousness and truth. Did not He fight your battle even to the death, and for your sake did He not spoil principalities and powers? Did He not overcome for you that mighty enemy of your soul who must otherwise have kept you in the bondage of sin and fear?

And now that, by His resurrection, He has proved His power, and has commissioned His Church to carry on the warfare against the power of evil, is it not your part to gird on your armour and, as a good soldier of His cross, to go to the front and

never be ashamed of His banner ? You are fighting under a victorious General, and you know beforehand that His kingdom must spread, and that at length He will put all enemies under His feet.

Therefore be brave and devoted to His cause. Never mind a few sword-cuts. Don't hesitate to be on Christ's side because you may meet occasionally with a little reproach for His sake. Day by day rise up in the morning with a prayer that you may in nowise dishonour Him, but that you may do something, however small, to advance His kingdom in the world.

And always remember the loving Redeemer is by your side. He is close at hand to succour and to help you. You are not left alone, but He is with you, and your least efforts to do good shall not be in vain.

## XV.

*STEPS IN THE RIGHT PATH.*

"By grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."—*Eph.* ii. 8-10.

I REMEMBER once an old clergyman very energetically giving me a bit of advice as to my work. He was very anxious that I should make everything plain in preaching to my flock. So he said more than once, "*Shew them the steps ! Shew them the steps !*"

Since then I have often tried to follow his good counsel, and in this short paper I should like to do so again. The passage above will just answer my purpose in doing this. It is a perfect gem of divinity. It puts everything exactly in its right place. It lays a good foundation, and then places a capital building and roof upon it. If you thoroughly understood and followed its teaching, and you were some day preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral, I feel sure you would give them a sound Gospel sermon. Look into it and study it for your-

self, and never forget it as long as you live. It goes very much in a line with a few words I lately met with—

*"Faithless works God won't regard,  
Workless faith He won't reward."*

Beside this couplet put four other lines—

Faith makes the Christian.  
Life shows the Christian.  
Trial tests the Christian.  
Death crowns the Christian.

But I must be brief, so will go straight to the words of Paul. The one point I want you to notice is the place of good works in the matter of salvation. You see he first utterly casts them out, and then as plainly brings them in again. He rejects them without the least exception from having any part in securing peace and salvation. Then he no less plainly shows that salvation always leads to them, and that every believer must walk in them. Just as tiles and slates would never do for the foundation of a house, and, in fact, would make it thoroughly insecure, and yet in their right place are most valuable, yea, absolutely necessary ; for what can be the comfort of a house unless the roof is tight and good ?

Bear in mind these two points. They will help you all through your Christian life.

Do you wish to be at peace with God, and to rejoice that sin is forgiven, and that you stand accepted and beloved with the Father ?

As to all this, works have no place whatever. It is "not of yourself," "not of works." All the good deeds in the world will not help you a whit. Deeds of charity, self-denial, hours spent in worship or in prayer, Church-going, acts performed in truth and justice—all most excellent in their place, yet they must not be relied upon in the very least in your approach to God. Salvation is a free gift. The remission of sins is a gift. The grace of the Spirit is a gift. Eternal life is a gift, both in the present foretaste and in the fulness hereafter. All comes as a free, undeserved gift, of God's tender loving-kindness through the work of the Lord Jesus. No goodness, no good feelings, no efforts of yours could have obtained it. It comes to you only on the footing of a present, and your part is to stretch out the empty hand of faith and thankfully accept it.

But remember this: a gift is only yours when you have taken it. Have you in your heart thanked God for this gift and taken it? Have you cast aside past neglect of religion? Have you given up trying to earn peace by your better life? Have you believed God's love in thus giving you salvation? Have you trusted in Jesus for all you need? Then you are saved; or, as in the Revised Version, "Ye have been saved." You are forgiven, and accepted, and at peace with God.

But do not forget the other side of this passage. When a man is saved, he is a piece of God's work-

manship. He is fashioned and formed of God by the inworking of the Holy Spirit. He is new-created in knowledge, holiness, and love, that he may glorify God by the good works he will perform. Here is the path marked out for him of God. From his conversion to his death he will find no comfort except as he steadfastly walks in it. He is not saved *by* works, but *for* works. Compare Titus ii. 14, iii. 4-8.

Be very careful, if you are Christ's indeed, to excel in every good word and work. Let the love of Christ rule in you, so that you walk in His footsteps. Do not wait for great opportunities. Be mindful about little things. Do not shrink from the trouble of a Sunday-school class. Redeem moments for prayer. Be kind and unselfish with school-fellows. Put a stumbling-block out of a brother's way. Let your religion be seen at home. "Keep the lower lights burning." As a son, a brother, or "the young master," let your influence be felt for good. "*Be zealous of good works.*"

## XVI.

*THE GOOD SHEPHERD.*

"I am the Good Shepherd ; and I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father ; and I lay down My life for the sheep."—*John x. 14, 15* (Revised Version).

THERE is something in the Lord Jesus—some office, some promise, some feature of His perfect character—that corresponds to every possible need of man. Who is there but has to confess with David, "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost"? But here is the all-sufficient answer. Jesus saith, "I am the Good Shepherd."

The figure is full of beauty and encouragement. It represents Christ as taking for our sake a position of humility; for the work of a shepherd is a lowly, self-denying work. He who fulfils it aright must be willing to track the footsteps of the wanderer, to tend the sick one, to bear in his arms or on his shoulder the weak and weary one. He must be willing, by day and by night, to be in the midst of them when it is needful, and to spare no toil or labour in finding

them good pasturage and in protecting them from danger.

And is not all this descriptive of that which I need from Christ day by day? I rejoice that my Shepherd is ever ready to restore me when for the moment I have turned aside from Him. He chastens me, but He does not cast me off. He permits me to feel the bitterness of my sin, but as soon as I own it, He waits to pardon and deliver me. He is the One who really cares for me. The hireling cares not for the flock, but the Good Shepherd does. He loves them, for they belong to Him. He cares for them with tenderer care than ever a mother cared for her infant child. He cares for their spiritual welfare, and He cares for their temporal comfort and success.

He is One ever near at hand. As the sleepless Guardian and Keeper of His people, He is never far away. But the feeblest cry of the weakest of His lambs awakens His sympathy. He is so nigh that not a petition, not a sigh of the heart, can escape His notice.

He is One who knows each of His own and all that concerns them. The expression used in the Revised Version is very suggestive of the closeness of the link that binds His flock to Him. "I know *Mine own*, and *Mine own* know Me." They are *His very own*—bought by Him, marked, and sealed, and loved by Him, His jewels, His precious treasure,

the objects of His perpetual solicitude. So, too, we have the intimacy of His knowledge. The Revised Version here again has important teaching: "*I know . . . even as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father.*" What knowledge could go deeper than this? So perfectly does He know all that concerns them—He knows their joys and their sorrows, their lesser troubles and their greater ones, their desolation when others join against them, or when they long for some one to love and care for them, and yet they are left alone. He knows their sore temptations and dark hours when they almost wish they were dead, and He knows, too, the hours when everything looks so bright and pleasant, and yet when danger is nearest. He knows and He undertakes for us under all. In infinite wisdom, though in ways past finding out, He sends the trial and He sends the relief. He gives the joy, and guards the heart, lest it prove a cause of harm.

He knows, He provides, and best of all He loves. "*I lay down My life for the sheep.*" Thrice He tells of this mighty proof of His changeless love (vers. 11, 15, 17).

And we see how perfectly voluntary was the sacrifice. On the one hand, it was willing obedience to the Father; on the other, it was in tenderest love to His sheep. No love like this before or after it! Put together all the love of bridegroom to bride, of parent to child, of brother to brother, of friend to friend—when placed beside the love of

Christ, what is it but the tiniest ray of light compared to the full radiance of the noonday sun ?

None can tell how much consolation is bound up in the thought of the Good Shepherd's care and love for His flock. In the hour when every earthly wish seems fulfilled, His presence gives additional gladness to the cup of blessing which He gives. In the hour when every light is quenched, and every mortal comfort dead, the sense of His abiding, constant affection and tender pitifulness brings a ray of hope into the soul, and points to a brighter future that lies before us.

But do you know Him as your Shepherd ? Mark the expression—“*Mine own know Me.*” Do you know Him ? Do you know His voice, and love to hearken, to trust, to obey it ? Do you know Him as having found you when far off from God, as having brought you back to His fold ? Do you know Him, as having washed you from the mire and the stain of past sins, and as having given you a conscience at peace through His blood ? Do you know Him, as guiding you day by day in paths of righteousness, as hearing your prayers, or keeping you from the power of the destroyer ? Do you know Him by the Spirit which He imparts ?

Remember that it is a personal, individual matter. Each sheep of the flock is sought and saved and led by the Good Shepherd in a way only

known to Christ and the soul, and, therefore, it cannot be ignorant of His merciful dealings. How do you stand this day, my young brother, with respect to the Good Shepherd? In your baptism you were committed to His care, and given up to Him, but have you made this a reality by your own willing choice? You have often gone astray in forbidden paths; but have you returned to Him as the Shepherd and Bishop of your soul? He has often come to you by the strivings of His Spirit and the calls of His Word: but have you yielded to Him? Have you entreated Him to receive you and to be with you and near you as your Shepherd all your days? Let there be no doubt about this. Let your eye be upon Him, and your whole life ruled by His grace and Spirit.

“ From a sinful world I flee,  
Shepherd of my soul, to Thee ! ”

## XVII.

*THE BEAUTIFUL FEET.*

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good!"—*Isa. lii. 7.*

NEVER were feet so beautiful as those of the Lord Jesus. Think of Him on Mount Olivet proclaiming blessing upon blessing on the humble and the contrite. Think of Him as He trod the waves of Gennesaret, and spoke to the troubled disciples, "It is I, be not afraid." Think of Him as He met the bier at Nain, and spoke to the sad heart of the widow, "Weep not." Think of Him as, wearied and footsore, He sat by the well of Sychar, and gave the living water to a thirsty soul. Think, too, of those feet of Jesus pierced and nailed to the cross for your sins and mine, and well may we be ready in spirit to act like the woman in the Gospel who kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment (Luke vii.)

But your feet may be beautiful too. If you follow His steps, and like Him go about "doing good," in His sight, in the sight of angels, in the sight of His people, your feet, sin-stained though

they may have been in days past, yet shall have a beauty and a glory of their own.

You remember, perhaps, the lines—

“Take my feet, and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.”

But how may this be?

Alas for the feet that are swift to do evil! There is many a foot that runs eagerly in ways that are not good. Cruelty, deceit, disregard of rightful authority, unfeeling indifference to the peace and welfare of others, utter mindlessness of God's fear and love, these things mark the path in which they walk. And many a footprint leaves a mark behind, a soul turned aside from truth and righteousness, a companion hardened in wickedness, a parent pained and saddened, the lad himself sinking deeper in the mire of sin. The sad proverb, “Over shoes, over boots,” has too often a fulfilment in such as fall to lower and lower depths of iniquity. But may your path be ever upward. May the marks left by your feet be such as will help and encourage, and not hinder, others in the path of life!

If you would have it so, remember *the feet first become beautiful when they return from the far country, and turn homeward to the Father's house.* Very beautiful in the father's eye were the feet of the prodigal, though shoeless and covered with dust from his long journey, when he came back from his life of waste and revelry.

Have your feet yet trodden this path? Have you ever truly said in your heart, "I will arise, and go to my Father?" and have you confessed to Him your sin, and found free forgiveness through His mercy in Christ?

Begin here, and the rest will follow. Free mercy covering you with the robe of a Redeemer's righteousness, and free grace filling your heart with a song of gladness, you will go forth with your "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Stand firm on the promises of the Gospel, and wherever you go you will love to carry the spirit and the message of the Gospel with you.

Then be careful about three or four points. *Let your feet carry you often to the throne of grace.* The path that leads to it should be trodden not only in the morning and evening, but many times a day. If you will only reckon it your highest privilege to be allowed to tell your wants and troubles to a Father who loves you, and then go to Him in Christ's name, many a word, a desire, a look may arise to Him through the day that will bring you in return peace and strength.

*Seek that your feet may be winged by zeal.* Be very zealous for God's glory and the welfare of others. Let not sloth and self-indulgence hinder you in doing some act of kindness that may be suggested to you. Be ever on the look-out for little opportunities of doing good. It may be but a word to cheer one in trouble, or a few minutes'

help to a young schoolfellow in some difficult bit of Latin he cannot master, or a trifling gift to a poor child in the street. But whatever your hand findeth to do in this way, do it with your might. Remember the good Samaritan. Think how he cared for the man fallen among thieves and bound up his wounds, and walked himself whilst the poor man rode on his beast to the inn. Ah, I think the feet of the Samaritan must have been very beautiful in the eyes of the one he so befriended! Act in the same spirit, and yours will be no less so in the eye of many a one whose sorrows or sufferings you have relieved.

*Seek also that your heart may be filled from the storehouse of God's truth.* No feet are more beautiful than those which carry the good tidings of God's love and salvation to those who are perishing. How beautiful were the feet of Philip in the eye of the eunuch when he could unfold to him the story of Christ's death, and show him His willingness and power to save! How beautiful were the feet of Peter in the house of Cornelius when he opened the door of faith to the Gentiles! How beautiful were the feet of Paul at Thessalonica and Philippi and Corinth to those who embraced the Gospel he preached!

Now, if you would be able to tell of Christ to others, like these servants of God, your own heart must be filled with the truth of the Gospel. You must seek to have its doctrines and promises

illumined by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, so that they may be life and joy to your own soul. Then be ready, as God opens the way, to carry the message to others. You may have many opportunities even at school, and still more at the University, or in other walks of life. And remember that but a few well-timed words, spoken in humility and love, may do a work for God that you could never have anticipated.

But is there no young friend who reads these lines who in a still higher sense may have "the beautiful feet?" It is a privilege in any way to carry the message of peace and salvation, but how great is the privilege of giving your whole life to this work! Is there no one willing and able out of love to Christ to seek for Holy Orders, and, at home or in the mission field, to spend your life in winning others for Him? If only the heart is right, it is far the most blessed work on earth. I know that it may not bring as much gold and silver as may sometimes be found in other callings. I know it brings with it much conflict and difficulty at the present day. But in spite of this it is the work most like that of Christ, and with His help and blessing may make you useful to thousands. O that some young heart might respond to this appeal, and seek guidance and direction from above to carry it out!

## XVIII.

*BE TRUTHFUL.*

"Thy servant went no whither."—*2 Kings v. 25.*

IN the kingdom of God it often comes to pass that the last become first and the first last. In the chapter from which these words are taken we have an example of it. Naaman, aforetime a heathen and a stranger, is healed of his leprosy and becomes a true worshipper of Jehovah. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, who had enjoyed in such a position rare opportunities for acquiring the knowledge of God, goes back into the darkness, becomes, like Judas, the slave of covetousness, turns to a course of deceit and lying, and receives as a reward the leprosy from which Naaman was freed. What a downright, palpable lie was that which he spake to his master—"Thy servant went no whither." For he had just returned with the two talents of silver and two changes of raiment which by gross falsehood he had obtained from Naaman. But the whole transaction profits him little. Deceit can hide nothing from God. Before Him the darkness

shineth as the light. And now the prophet uncovers the wicked deed, and with well-deserved severity pronounces a sore judgment upon him and his seed.

Permit me, my young friend, very earnestly to enforce the lesson that arises from the story. It is quite possible that to yourself it may not be needed. You may from your earliest youth have shrunk from anything approaching a lie. Thank God if this be the case. But it is well even for you to be strengthened in your purpose always to be truthful. And there may be other readers by whom the caution is still more needed than by yourself.

Four points I will just name which I should like you to bear in mind.

*All untruthfulness is the direct work of the Wicked One.* "When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John viii. 44). Peter said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" All lying is from beneath. It is the child of hell, and to hell it leads.

*It is a deadly wrong against the one who utters it.* To speak falsely brings a stain and a blot upon the character. It leaves a mark which is not easily erased. There are lads walking about our play-grounds of whom the heart of the master says—"I cannot trust a word that lad speaks." Moreover, sooner or later it brings a burden on the conscience. To cherish any habit of the kind is to do yourself

harm in every way. Nothing can compensate you for it. Better far lose a thousand pounds than tell a lie.

*It is a grievous injury to those about you.* Your example leads others into the same evil courses. If you deceive others, they will strive to deceive you. Moreover, Christians should remember that we are "members one of another," hence we ought to speak only what is true. The eye ought not to lie against the ear, nor the hand against the foot. When in any way you deceive another, you utterly break the law of love.

*It is a grievous dishonour to God Himself.* He is "the God of Truth." We read of Christ that "guile was not found in His lips." All through those three - and - thirty years never did the least shadow of falsehood mar His holy and beautiful life. To act otherwise is to throw contempt upon Him, and to put a stumbling-block in the way of His kingdom.

But I trust you are at one with me in this matter. You wish to follow in Christ's footsteps. You wish to avoid every breach of the law of truth. To help you I will name a few special cautions that may assist you in keeping from every phase of this sin. For through the craft of the enemy this sin assumes various shapes. Most persons see the evil of a positive, downright lie. But there is a lie that looks like truth, a word that is true in the letter but false in the spirit, something that

pleads necessity or custom, or in some way hides its baseness behind a fair face. This needs unravelling.

*Take heed of a double use of words.* A word may mean one thing to you and another to the hearer. You may change the meaning of a sentence by the very tone of your voice, or your manner in uttering it. Some one may say something in a joke, and you may repeat it as if spoken seriously. You may leave out a word that modifies it, or add a word that exaggerates its force.

*Take heed of silent lies.* Your silence may deceive at times as much as anything you could say. Have you known or done anything amiss, and keep silence as though you knew it not? Have you told all the truth about something you wish to sell? I remember a five-pound note being refused by a man who would not keep silence in reference to the faults of a horse which his neighbour wished to sell.

*Take heed of acted lies.* You may act so as to deceive. You may look innocent and turn the other way as if you knew nothing of something that took place under your eyes. You may conceal books which ought not to be in your possession. In lessons, in school-chapel, in a thousand matters deceit is practised though no false word be uttered.

*Take heed of lies to cover a fault, or maintain your own opinion.* I know few more frequent causes for untruthfulness than these. An accident has occurred, or you come in a quarter of an hour

late, and then try to put it off on some one else. Or perhaps you want to make good something you have said, and so you just cast in a spice of untruth to make the story fit, or to prevent acknowledging a mistake you have made.

In all these things be quite honest with yourself and with God. Whatever conscience may bring back to you, hear its voice. Do not hide the wound by self-flattery or vain excuses. Lay bare every secret before the God of truth. Ask for full cleansing and forgiveness through Christ's blood. Then ask that through the grace of the Holy Spirit you may abhor deceit in whatever shape it may tempt you. There is no more blessed heritage you can crave than this, that Christ should regard you with His approval, and say of you as once He said of Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

"Truthful Spirit, dwell with me,  
I myself would truthful be;  
And with wisdom, pure and clear,  
Let Thy life in mine appear."

## XIX.

*THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER.*

"Wait on thy God continually."—*Hos. xii. 6.*

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary ; and they shall walk and not faint."—*Isa. xl. 31.*

NONE can tell the privilege of prayer if only it be real and true. Prayer is the great feeder and sustainer of the Divine life. Prayer fans the flame of grace, and makes it burn brighter and brighter. Prayer counterplots the devil, and confounds all his devices. Prayer gives force and power to every effort for the good of others. Therefore pray. Pray in sincerity. Pray frequently. Never, never grow weary of prayer.

Do you remember when Hagar cast her son down under the shrubs on the way to Egypt ? He had no water, and it seemed that he must die. But what is told us afterwards ? "God heard the voice of the lad ;" and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said unto her, "What aileth thee, Hagar ? Fear not : God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is" (Gen. xxi. 17).

I am not sure whether it is meant that Ishmael prayed, or that God heard the cry of his distress and need. In either case it is a great encouragement to a lad to pray ; for if it were but the cry of his distress that God heard, how much more will He hear and regard the earnest cry of faith and prayer ! And God heard him "*where he was*," under the shrub. And God will hear you wherever you pray. It may be in the school-chapel or the dormitory, or during a stroll in the playground, or during a walk along the road ; but wherever you pray in your heart, if it be but a word, but a sigh toward heaven, an upward look, there is an eye to notice it, and an ear to receive it.

Perhaps you ask—How shall I pray ? Make a *conscience* of your prayers. Remember that the words, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," are as plain a command as "Thou shalt do no murder." Prayer and praise are the bounden duty of man towards the Creator who formed him capable of worship. Do not slight this duty. Do not permit the society of the careless to hinder your performance of it. Do not neglect prayer, or hurry over it, or be content with a few words in bed. Look upon a day without prayer as a positive sin, a robbery of your own soul, an injury to those connected with you, and a dishonour to God Himself.

Make a *reality* of your prayers. Think over them beforehand. Shut the door of your chamber

against your dearest friend, and the door of your heart against all intruding thoughts. Beware of lip prayers, for God searcheth the heart. Beware of mere formal, unfelt prayers, for "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." Speak to God as to a kind Father or a loving Friend. Be particular in asking what you really need and desire. Ask for things that you really wish for to add to your daily happiness, as well as for spiritual blessings. Confess, one by one, the sins of which conscience accuses you. Name before God your parents, your brothers or sisters, and ask a blessing for each. Think of the daily mercies you receive, and heartily thank God for them. Be very real in every prayer you offer. Whether it be short or long, only let it be the genuine expression of your desires, and it will not be lost.

Make a *pleasure* of your prayers. There are many who know that prayer is a duty, but there they stop. They do not take any delight in prayer. It is a dull routine they try to get through, and are glad when it is over. But try to rise far above this. Do not say to yourself, "I must pray," but rather say, "Thank God, I am allowed to pray."

If a rich man, and one worthy of your highest regard, one who could counsel you in difficulty, and whose society was always pleasant and profitable—if such a man were to ask you to his house whenever you liked, and then you found he was

always ready to give you a little pocket-money, or perhaps an interesting book, or some other token of his affection, you would scarcely say, "I must go and call on Mr. So-and-So," but when you could you would go with all your heart.

Now think of your Father in heaven. Oh, if only you knew Him! If only you knew one half of His kind thoughts toward you, and His willingness to help you! Why, if you did, twenty times a day you would rejoice to come to Him, if it were but for a moment's prayer. You would find a real pleasure in every season for prayer. Do you wish to experience this? I will give you one or two further hints.

Consider this: *God delights in the true-hearted prayers of His children.* He delights to listen to them, and then to give them in His infinite wisdom a large and rich answer to their petitions. Now, if God delights to hearken and to give, should not you delight to ask and receive? If He is so bountiful that it is a pleasure to Him to open His hand wide in giving, surely it should be a joy to you to go and tell Him your wants and necessities.

*Give God credit for His tender Fatherliness.* Remember His heart of love towards those who seek Him. Remember, too, the channel through which your prayers arise to heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ is ever pleading at the Father's right hand, and He gives you His name as the ground of your

confidence. His name is an all-sufficient plea, and you can never use it in vain before God.

Remember, too, that the Holy Spirit is ever ready to assist you in prayer. He will prompt and suggest that for which you should pray. When you feel dead and cold in prayer, He is ready to come and quicken your heart that you may desire spiritual things, and realise that the Father is nigh to hear you.

Think, too, of the great promise given at the head of this chapter to those who wait on God. Whilst even the young and the strong who depend on their own strength or resolution will utterly fall, if you depend on God you will renew your strength. Upward, higher and higher, you shall mount in faith and hope. Onward in the heavenly race you shall run with patience and perseverance. You shall neither faint nor grow weary till you reach the City of the Living God. Oh, that you would pray, and pray perpetually!

“ Whate'er the care that breaks thy rest,  
Whate'er the wish that swells thy breast,  
Spread before God that wish, that care,  
And change anxiety to prayer.”

## XX.

*JOY IN CHRIST'S ASCENSION.*

"And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God."—*Luke xxiv. 52, 53.*

WHAT a marvellous contrast between the two partings of Christ from His disciples !

At the first He was lifted up on a cross of shame, condemned as a malefactor, mocked and scorned both by Jew and Gentile.

At the second He was lifted up indeed, but by Divine power to the right hand of the Father, exalted far above all principality and power.

At the first the parting was by His death, when, after He had commended His spirit into the Father's hands, He was laid in Joseph's new tomb, there to await the hour of His resurrection.

At the second He ascended that He might live evermore the Divine Head of His Church, to exert His Almighty power for her eternal salvation.

At the first parting all was sadness, and grief, and bitterness of heart. Never a darker day in the history of the Church than that which followed Christ's crucifixion.

At the second all was joy, gratitude, praise, hope. Not a sigh or sorrow marked the separation. Whether in the Temple with their fellows, or alone, each heart thrills with a new and lasting joy.

Follow the disciples that day to Bethany. The Master is with them. And now, after a renewed promise of the Comforter, He lifts up His hands upon them and leaves with them a parting blessing. Often had He pronounced words of blessing, but never a richer or fuller blessing than He left with them that day. And whilst He blesses He is taken up from them and carried up into heaven. With longing, wistful gaze, they turn their eyes upward to catch but another sight of their ascending Lord. But He is gone. Then angels recall them to the work that lies before them. Let them not look up toward heaven in the hope of one more glimpse of Him they love. He shall return, but not now. Not till the work of His Church is done, not till His Gospel has been preached for a witness everywhere, shall He come again. So they leave Bethany and return to Jerusalem. Daily songs of heartfelt praise, daily manifestations of the joy that filled their souls, mingled with the continual prayers which they offered together for the fulfilment of the great promise of the descent of the Comforter.

And why should not you also rejoice in the remembrance of Christ's ascension? If you have cast in your lot with Christ, if you trust in His death as the ransom for your sin, and look to Him

to save and keep you from its power, then rejoice with these early disciples in the gladness that this fact brings to you.

Rejoice in Him as your *Forerunner*. As a father sometimes goes to a new country first to prepare the home and to make everything ready for his children, so Christ has gone to take possession of the kingdom in your name.

Rejoice in this. Your home is above. Your citizenship is there. Your Representative is there. Therefore let your heart be there also. Cherish a heavenly mind. The Collect of our Church for Ascension Day suggests a petition we should often present before the mercy-seat, "Grant that like as we do believe Thy Son, Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens, we may thither in heart and mind ascend, and with Him continually dwell."

Rejoice in Christ as your *Exalted High Priest*. He ever pleads for you. Your name is graven upon His hand and His heart. He knows all your temptations, and feels for you in every sorrow and trial that comes to you. Therefore look up to Him with cheerful hope. See Him before the throne whenever you bend the knee. Expect for His sake a large answer to each petition. Since we have such a merciful and faithful Advocate and Intercessor, let us pray with full confidence, and never doubt that our feeblest prayers shall be graciously and abundantly answered.

Rejoice in Him as your *glorious King*. He reigns

over all things both in heaven and earth, and though for a season He withhold the tokens of His power, yet no less is He ordering all things for the good of His Church and the fulfilment of His purposes. He sits at the Father's right hand until all His enemies be made His footstool.

Only be loyal to His cause. Stand up for Him when others speak evil of His name. Catch the brave spirit of the Psalmist when he gloried in the King of Zion.

I close with a few lines of Bishop Wordsworth's exquisite hymn on the Ascension.

"Who is this that comes in glory, with the trump of jubilee ?  
Lord of battles, God of armies, He has gained the victory :  
He who on the cross did suffer, He who from the grave  
arose,  
He has vanquished sin and Satan, He by death hath spoiled  
His foes.

See Him who is gone before us, heavenly mansions to  
prepare,  
See Him who is ever pleading for us with prevailing  
prayer,  
See Him who, with sound of trumpet, and with His angelic  
train,  
Summoning the world to judgment, on the clouds will  
come again.

Lift us up from earth to heaven, give us wings of faith and  
love,  
Gales of holy aspirations wafting us to realms above,  
That, with hearts and minds uplifted, we with Christ our  
Lord may dwell,  
Where He sits enthroned in glory, in His heavenly citadel."

## XXI.

*THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT.*

"The love of the Spirit."—*Rom. xv. 30.*

"THE love of the Spirit" is here set before us as a motive for earnest and sincere prayer. And it may well strengthen us in this blessed privilege. For in His love He will aid us in our prayers. He will remove our hindrances. He will quicken our hearts, that our prayers may be real and true.

"The love of the Spirit!" Do we not often forget this? We think often, it may be, of the love of the Father and of the love of the Son, nor can we think too much of either. But let us not forget to ponder the love of the Blessed Spirit, the Comforter, the Friend who takes the place of the Lord Jesus, the One who has so much to do with the peace and salvation of every child of God.

But how may we see clearly His great love toward us?

Look at it in this light. Suppose there were one for whom you had never cared. You never wished

to have his company. You never desired him to visit you in your home. You did many things that pained and grieved him, and yet all the while he was thinking of you in kindness, and giving proofs of his affection. One day he sent you a most valuable book, one so full of wise counsel and advice that whilst you followed it you could never fail to take the best path in life. But more than this. Your friend watched your life, and saw dangers before you that you could not see, and so again and again he sent you a special message or direction, and whenever you followed it you found you had done right.

Does not this give us one view of the love of the good Spirit of God? It tells us of His love even to those who turn away from it.

For what a book of love and wisdom is that which He inspired holy men of God to write! It is He especially who has given us this book. Every part of it is from Him, and every part of it is calculated to guide and direct us. It gives plain directions how to avoid sin. It points out every peril that lies in your path. It reveals the way of peace and of life everlasting. And what thousands of hearts have been upheld and comforted in days of sorrow and distress by the promises here given to us! Shall we not see in this the love of the Spirit, as also in the inward suggestions and warnings, and monitions of conscience which He stirs up to lead men to a better life?

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But still more do we trace the Spirit's love in His giving life to dead souls, and thus drawing them into fellowship with God. Nothing is a greater proof of love in a servant of Christ than in his going on day by day seeking the salvation of another who returns only evil for good, and whose spirit and conduct cause him nothing but sorrow. And does not the good Spirit find in each of us at first the very same thing? Does He not find the rebellious will of man utterly opposed to the will of God? Does He not find the heart hard, and cold, and dead to spiritual things? Yet does that gentle, patient Spirit come nigh, and work in men's hearts a consciousness of their sin, and of the grace and power of the Lord Jesus. What love is there in every gentle drawing of the heart, in every cause of unbelief removed, in every fresh view of Christ's willingness and faithfulness to save!

Nor less do we see the love of the Spirit in His willingness to take up His abode in the mean cottage of the believer's heart. If one of noble birth and pure tastes were in kindness to make his home with one in whom there was much that pained him, only that he might raise and elevate his character, we should reckon it the very essence of self-sacrificing love. And yet does not the Holy Spirit make His temple within the soul where still abides much corruption and evil? What unbelief, forgetfulness, murmuring, unthankfulness, waywardness,

and backsliding arise from time to time in those who have been born of God, and who have learnt that in Christ alone is their help and salvation !

Perhaps most clearly of all may we see the love of the Spirit in His shedding abroad in the heart the love of the Father and the Son.

As the Spirit of Love He would have us know in all its fulness the love which God has shown to us in redemption. He brings home to us the Fatherliness of God. He teaches us the love of the cross, as seen not only in its purpose, but in those last words there spoken by the Son of Man. He unveils the love seen in each office of the Lord Jesus, and in each gracious promise that He has spoken for our comfort. Much more I might add. But never shall we know how much we are indebted to the love of the Spirit until, perfected in Christ's likeness and found without spot and blemish, we see that it is His work, and wrought solely for us through His great and abiding love.

Is the Holy Spirit so full of love toward you ? Then do not grieve Him or refuse to hear His voice. Never a kinder or more faithful guest than the Comforter will prove to you if only you give heed to Him and follow His guidance. Ask Him to come and dwell with you.

“Gentle, awful, Holy Guest,  
Make Thy temple in each breast ;  
There supreme to reign and rest,  
Comforter Divine.”

And watch, lest by wilful misdoing you quench His grace and drive Him from you. Strife, deceit, impurity, lightness in holy things, evil tempers He abhors, and cannot stay where they are cherished. But humility, and faith, and heavenly thoughts, and deeds of love are His delight. Therefore choose that which pleases Him, and put away that which He hates. So will He abide with you an ever-increasing power, and His light, and presence, and joy shall make perpetual sunshine in your soul.

## XXII.

*CHRISTIAN HOPE.*

"There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles, on Him shall the Gentiles hope. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost."—*Rom. xv. 12, 13*  
(Revised Version).

IN the days of youth hope is like an Alpine climber, reaching a higher and a higher ascent, ever aiming at still loftier peaks, and scarcely resting till the greatest height has been attained. Various are the forms which this hope assumes. It may be the attainment of that which adds to our comfort, or it may be something far nobler, aiming at the discovery of some new truth or the carrying out some great design for the welfare of our fellow-creatures. And though such hope may often sadly fail of its object, yet it frequently has a mighty power in quickening the energies of a young man, and enabling him to mount far higher than otherwise would be possible.

A true Christian hope has a no less mighty force, whilst it cannot fail of a sure and blessed

fulfilment. It is described as "an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast;" it is as a helmet to cover the head in the day of battle. St. Paul declares that we are "saved by hope," and that "hope maketh not ashamed." In days of sore trial, when everything seems to be against us, when the enemies of the truth seem to prosper, and the position of Christ's true Church and people is very discouraging, hope looks forward to a serener future and lifts her head above the threatening waves, in the assurance that the purposes of Eternal Love shall never be made void.

In the passage at the head of this chapter we see Christian hope linked with each person of the Blessed Trinity. And it is worth while noticing this. In Holy Scripture the doctrine of the Trinity is never given to us as a theological problem, but as the source and spring of endless joy. It is in various aspects a revelation of the love of God. It tells how the Father gave the Son, how the Son gave Himself, how the Holy Spirit new-creates the soul to know and love God. It tells how the Father is on a throne of grace to hear prayer, how the Son pleads as our great High Priest, how the good Spirit helps our infirmities and enables us to pray as we ought.

So in these words of Paul do we see the bright and joyful hope which the Christian may cherish coming to him through the goodwill and working of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

O that we were more grateful for this revelation of love coming to us through the Eternal Trinity ! O that we ever more joyfully offered the adoration that is due when we join so frequently in the time-honoured words—"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!"

But more particularly look at this threefold view of hope.

The Father is "the God of Hope." It is a grace He loves to dispense and to behold amongst His children. He is not the God of fear, or of gloom, or of darkness. No, He has given His glorious Gospel, with all its rich and unchanging provisions of grace ; He has prepared mansions of rest, and such joys as no human heart can conceive ; He has made plain His faithfulness and the certainty of those good things which He has provided ; and He has done it to this very end, that His children may have strong consolation, and may hope evermore in the fulfilment of His gracious promises.

Then likewise, as "the God of Hope," He delights to see a hopeful spirit in those who belong to His household. What parent would like to see his children looking troubled and anxious when he was careful in every way to provide for their enjoyment and comfort ? And is it not the same with our Father above ? Would He have you fearful and

depressed, and always afraid of what may happen in the future, instead of cherishing the bright and joyous spirit which a lively hope engenders in the breast?

If you would honour God, wear continually the helmet of hope. Even if everything around you and within tends to keep you low, still hope against hope, and in spite of appearances, yes, and of inward doubts, put your trust firmly on the truth of God's Word, and be sure that it will be fulfilled in its season. For remember the further encouragements which He gives to enable you to do this.

You have the *Lord Jesus Christ as the unchanging object of your hope*. It is here we see in this passage the improvement in the Revised Version. The original word is not "trust," but "hope." "On Him shall the Gentiles hope." As in 1 Tim. i. 1, "Christ Jesus, our Hope." You cannot hope in yourself, for in yourself you find only evil, and weakness, and constant proneness to turn aside. But you may hope in Jesus, for He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. He will save you in the future as He has in the past. He begins the work in the soul; He carries it on, and He perfects it. You may hope in Him as your Saviour, your Shepherd, and your King. He will never fail you nor forsake you, but guide you every step of your pilgrimage. You may hope in Him, for He comes again to give rest, and honour, and glory, and a kingdom, and a crown to those who look to Him.

Well may you hope in Jesus if your faith has but touched the hem of His garment, and you humbly look to Him day by day.

And still further encouragement is given you here. Not only is God the God of hope, not only is the Lord Jesus the object of your hope, when in yourself you find everything to disquiet you, but you have also the Holy Ghost, the efficient dispenser and worker of hope in the soul. "Now the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope *in the power of the Holy Ghost.*"

Here we have the good Spirit of God implanting and nurturing hope within the soul. It is He who enlightens the heart to discern the grounds of hope. He removes the veil and mist of uncertainty and error and unbelief. He gives a vividness and reality to that which is yet out of our gaze. He points to Jesus as the bright and morning star, and tells of the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Thus He makes hope to grow, increase, and abound. He drives away our fears, and in place of them He gives a heart to sing of the land of the blest.

"Onward, ever onward, journeying o'er the road  
Worn by saints before us, journeying on to God ;  
Leaving all behind us may we hasten on,  
Backward never looking till the prize is won."

## XXIII.

*MARVELLOUS LOVING-KINDNESS.*

"How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God ! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings."—*Ps. xxxvi. 7.*

Look away to the heavens and you learn the height of God's mercy. Look away to the clouds rolling on far over your head and you see how His faithfulness exceeds all your thoughts. Look at the glorious mountains and you have a picture of His firm and steadfast righteousness. Look at you yawning precipice and you may gain a view of the mystery of His judgments. (See vers. 5, 6.)

But look again and see in God's loving-kindness the head and crown of all His attributes. It is this which here and elsewhere causes the Psalmist to burst forth in adoration and praise : "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God !"

It is in the story of redemption we see the loving-kindness of our God in its brightest colours.

"By the light of nature we see God above us.

"By the light of the law we see God against us.

"By the light of the Gospel we see God for us."

Behold the infant Saviour lying in no soft cradle, but in a manger in Bethlehem's cave, and you see One who came to bring the light of life to every child of Adam's race. You see in Him One who can take out of life's burdens and griefs their bitterest ingredients, and over all remaining ills can shed a ray of brightest hope. And what but the loving-kindness of our God could give to us One who could thus be our everlasting consolation?

Behold Him in His later days surrounded by multitudes of the sick and suffering. See blind and dumb, and palsied and lame, flocking around Him, while his heart went forth to them in tenderest pity; see His healing touch bringing sight or hearing, speech, strength, or healing, according to the need of each one. And was there not in all this a manifestation of a Father's loving-kindness? For Christ was the image of the Invisible God, the revealer of the Father, and all that He thus did on earth tells us plainly of the tender compassion and love of Him who dwells above. It shows us how the Father pities and cares for every one in pain and affliction and distress of any kind. It shows how we may bring to His mercy-seat every infirmity that affects the body, and every spiritual malady that troubles the soul.

Behold the Lord Jesus again in the day of His humiliation and agony. You see One on a cross,

despised and rejected, bruised and wounded, deserted by friends and mocked by enemies, yea, apparently for the moment forsaken both by God and man. And what was the ultimate cause of it all, but the loving-kindness of our God? It was tender love and nothing else. It was love in the Father to give His Son. It was love in Christ to give Himself. In love He bought His bride the Church, and for her life He laid down His own. In love He paid the whole debt that man owed to the justice of God. In love He opened up a new and living way to the Father, and by death destroyed the power of death and trod down the power of man's worst enemy, the devil.

O the loving-kindness that shone forth so brightly in every moment of agony, in every word He spoke in that dark hour, and in every prayer He breathed into the Father's ear! And no less in the manifold fruits of redemption. What unspeakable loving-kindness in the free and perfect blotting out of all sin, in the gift of the Comforter, in the peace which the world giveth not, in the joys of adoption as God's beloved children, and in the imperishable mansion and unfading inheritance!

But what is your value of this marvellous loving-kindness? Can you say with David, "Thy loving-kindness is better than life?" For be assured nothing will make up for the loss of it, and nothing can take its place. You may try to satisfy yourself with something else. You may be content to

take your fill of what the world can give you. But sooner or later it will all fail. What would this world be without the sun? What will your soul do without the sunshine of God's love? At the best all else is but as starlight or moonlight; it never brings the warmth and joyous gladness of God's loving-kindness. You cannot do without it. This alone can cheer and sustain your heart amidst the trials of your pilgrimage. This alone can be your stay when every earthly tie is broken. This alone can give light to the dying eye, and assure you of a home beyond the grave. Therefore fly to the shelter of God's covering wings. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

## XXIV.

*NO WORD OF GOD CAN FAIL.*

"The word of our God shall stand for ever."—*Isa. xl. 8.*

I HAVE often thought over an illustration of this truth taken from Old Testament times. When Jericho perished before the children of Israel, Joshua declared from the mouth of God a special curse on any one who should rebuild the city. He declared that he should lay the foundation in his first-born, and set up the gates in his youngest son (*Josh. vi. 26.*)

For many a year the word of God was feared and regarded. For about five centuries no one dared to put his hand to rebuild a city which, for its abounding wickedness in days past, lay under the ban of the Most High. Its massive walls lay a heap of ruins. Wild beasts of the forest would make the place their abode, and birds of the air would there make their nests. But no human foot trod the spot where once had been so great and populous a city.

However, it was not always thus. In the days

**24th Sunday.]**

of Ahab, wickedness, idolatry, and Baal-worship filled the land. Few reverenced the true God, and most men were willing followers of an ungodly king. Then rose a man more wicked than his fellows. Living at Bethel, the seat of idolatry, he scorned the faith of Jehovah and had no fear of His judgments. So Hiel, for this was his name, began his accursed work. Rebuild Jericho he will, so he lays its foundation, and possibly he made it a great day of rejoicing for himself and his friends. But it ended in a great sorrow. The old curse was still living and mighty. Just as grains of wheat buried in the mummy-cases in Egypt were found to have life in them after the lapse of many centuries, so is it with God's Word. Hiel found it so.

The angel of death touched his first-born, Hiram. If the corner-stone of the city was laid, that of his own family was taken away. But he still perseveres. He may have reckoned it but a chance that had happened to him. Or he may have had as little love for his children as he had regard for God. Any way, the work went forward, the city was rebuilt, and the gates set in their place. But the old curse still moves on to its complete fulfilment. The elder son had died, so now the youngest, Segub, dies also. In no particular does the word of the Lord fail. By the grave of his two sons might this scornful unbeliever learn the sureness of the threatenings which were uttered by the living God. Did this man learn wisdom by the

judgments of God? Did the death of his sons prove life to his own soul? We cannot tell. But there is a message from God to us from the story. May we only have grace to learn it!

I want you to notice that the two sons of Hiel were cut off *as the fruit of unbelief and sin*. In this case it was the sin of a parent; and no less is it true now that many a child dies through the sinful self-indulgence or evil habits of a father or mother. But are there not many brought to an early grave through their own sin? Are there not secret vices, of which it is difficult to speak, which plant in many a constitution the seeds of premature death? Are there not evil habits which sap health and vigour, and not seldom destroy life itself?

But the main lesson I want you to learn is the *stability and sureness of the Word of God*. You may hear many things which may be apt to shake your confidence in this. Theories of science seem now and then to clash with it. Very clever objections can be raised against certain doctrines of the Gospel.

Nor is it wise to attempt hastily to answer doubts and questions which may be proposed. The solution may not be easy, nor may it be found at once. But do not in the very least cast aside your faith in the truth of God's Word. I have no doubt that in Ahab's days the land abounded in clever sceptics. Numbers would laugh at the stories which their faithful forefathers believed. They would glory in

being emancipated from old fetters. They would make very light of the curse which Joshua had uttered. *Nevertheless it came true.* It came true to the very letter, and at the time foretold.

Bear this in mind. It is quite possible darker days may lie before us. Unbelief and ungodliness may spread like a flood, and the plain lessons of Divine truth may be trampled under foot. Men may deny the sinfulness of man and the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death, and the work of the Comforter and eternal judgment.

But God cannot die, and His truth cannot die; and the doctrines so plainly declared in the Apostles' Creed cannot die, but will live on, to the everlasting joy of those who hold them fast, and the eternal confusion of those who reject them.

All will come to pass that God hath spoken. The good and the evil, the sweet and the bitter, the heavenly consolations and the second death—not one thing will fail thereof.

Which shall be yours? Which will you choose?

I pray you be wise. Honour God's Word. Fear its warnings. Trust its promises. Then you shall never be ashamed. God will be to you a tower of strength, and His presence and love your portion for ever.

## XXV.

*A PRACTICAL QUESTION.*

"Art not thou also one of His disciples?"—*John xviii. 25.*

THE rash zeal of Peter in cutting off the ear of Malchus was one cause of his terrible fall. Had he been distrustful of himself and watchful over his own spirit, he would have been more likely to keep out of danger. But his hasty action in the garden and his eagerness to show that his promise to Christ was not a mere empty boast brought him into prominence, and so no doubt there came question upon question which only opened the way for his threefold denial.

"Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not."

Ah, Peter, how soon thou hast broken thy plighted word, and denied thy Lord, who yet loved thee through it all. How shamefully hast thou dishonoured Him who at that very hour was preparing to yield up His life for thy salvation! But thy faithful Shepherd would not cast thee off. And in later days at least the old promise was better kept. Thou didst then prove thy fidelity even unto

death. Restored by His grace, forgiven through His free mercy, strengthened by His Spirit, thou didst fight the good fight and win a crown bright with many a gem.

*"Art not thou also one of His disciples?"* But let me put the question first in the form in which it is given in the Revised Version.

*"Art thou also one of His disciples?"* It is a home thrust, an inquiry for every lad who reads these pages. Art thou a learner at His feet? Hast thou come and enrolled thyself amongst such as follow Him? Is it thy full purpose to follow Him "whithersoever He goeth?"

It was reckoned in olden time an honour to be a disciple of one of the wise men of Greece, but they passed away, and for the most part their doctrine and teaching with them. But to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus is to accept the word of One whose doctrine shall yet fill the world, and shall decide the eternal destiny of all mankind.

I trust you are one of His disciples. It may be only a beginner. It may be a very weak disciple, but still you own Christ as your Master, and you wish to be whole-hearted in His service. Then let me put before you what your position implies. Let me remind you of those points on which you should be watchful.

*"Art not thou also one of His disciples?"* Then you must be prepared to walk in the footsteps of

your Master. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord" (Matt. x. 24, 25).

*You must be content to tread a lowly path through life, if it be God's will.* It was the path Christ chose. He was willingly subject to Joseph and Mary at Nazareth for many a long year. During most of His life He worked as a carpenter, and was utterly unknown to the great world outside the village where He dwelt. Be willing also, if the path of duty lie there, to tread the valley rather than the mountain-top. Be willing to leave to others eagerly to seek the heights of man's praise and this world's distinction. Do your duty manfully, fill your niche well, and then God will send you that which is the very best. If He should send honour and high position and increasing prosperity, never forget that it is His gift and use it to do His work the better. If He should appoint otherwise, be well content to have it so. The humblest lot in fellowship with Christ is far happier than the highest if you be a stranger to Him.

*You must bear your cross cheerfully and bravely for His sake.* Do not make a cross for yourself by your self-will or want of judgment, or lack of courtesy or consistency. But whatever cross He lays upon you, bear it after Him. It may come in the shape of hard words and misrepresentation. It may

come in days of suffering or sorrow. It may come through failure to achieve what you have toiled to obtain. It may come in separation from those you love. But, whatever it be, let your eye be upon Him, and patiently endure it because it is His will, and the discipline He has appointed.

*You must copy His holy and sinless life.* Every member of Christ suffered in His bitter agonies. So by His grace you must crucify the sins that pertain to each member. Was He scourged with cruel stripes? Then flee from softness and self-indulgence to the flesh. Was His brow pierced with thorns? Then flee from all pride of intellect, and from all vanity of good looks. Was His tongue parched with thirst? Then beware lest your tongue utter words of folly and sin, or anything which He would disapprove. Were His hands nailed to the cross? Then keep your hands from writing or doing anything amiss. And let every member be employed in His service and for His glory.

*You must cultivate unity of spirit with all who belong to Him.* There ought to be no jealousy or envy, no coldness or distance, no ill judgings and unkind suspicions amongst His disciples. He would have them all one in heart and mind. He would have them forbearing and forgiving toward each other. He would have them bound together firmly with the cord of holy charity, and ready to help each to the utmost of their power.

*"Art thou also one of His disciples?"* Then you shall share His glory and His kingdom. Nothing shall be too great or too good for one who has been thoroughly loyal to His cause.

Earthly monarchs and generals love to display their generous appreciation of deeds of distinguished valour, especially when performed in the presence of rebels or half-hearted adherents. But in this none shall equal our great Captain. Beyond all our hopes, beyond all that it is possible for us now to conceive, will be the bright reward of those who have truly served Him.

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

## XXVI.

*THE BRAVEST HERO.*

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."—*Prov. xvi. 32.*

THIS is scarcely the verdict which the world would give; for there are honours, and rewards, and titles always ready to be showered upon those who are successful in military feats. They take their place at once amongst the great ones of the land, and are praised and flattered wherever they go.

But the One who always judgeth right, and can see beneath the surface, adjudgeth the prize to a conqueror in another sphere. For He knows that the battle with self is a far harder one than that with any external foe. And he who comes off a victor in that strife shall win the brightest crown.

Let us look at the enemy with which we have to contend, and then at the means by which we may tread him under our feet.

The foe we have to fight is an unruly spirit and temper. And it is no trifling one. Take a striking passage which presents a great contrast to the words above: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit

is like a city that is broken down and without walls" (Prov. xxv. 28).

Imagine such a city, and enemies round about on every side. Soldiers and horsemen may ravage the fields, destroy the flocks, cut down the trees, carry off the spoil, and kill and slay at their pleasure these within the city.

Such is the soul of man where there is no control over the spirit, and where ill-tempers are permitted to break forth as they will.

In a dozen quarters temptation may assault you, and you cannot withstand it. Then with these evil tempers there comes the loss of all peace, a constant failure in any attempt to rise to a better life, a conscience never at rest; and, beyond all this, an uncontrolled temper opens the door to the most violent language, sometimes to oaths and cursing, and even to cruelty and murder. In numberless cases it has blighted all the fair prospects of a useful and happy life, and has done a vast amount of harm to those around. It may be but a spark has fallen on another heart, and this, too, has kindled into a flame, and none can trace how far the injury spreads.

On this point I will quote the words of the present Bishop of London in a sermon preached in Rugby School Chapel :—

" Of all things that are to be met with here on earth there is nothing which can give such continual, such cutting, such useless pain as an

undisciplined temper. The touchy and sensitive temper which takes offence at a word ; the irritable temper which finds offence in everything, whether intended or not ; the violent temper which breaks through all bounds of reason when once roused ; the jealous or sullen temper which wears a cloud on the face all day and never utters a word of complaint ; the discontented temper always brooding over its own wrongs ; the severe temper which always looks at the worst side of whatever is done ; the wilful temper which overrides all scruple to gratify a whim. What an amount of pain have these caused in the hearts of men if we could but sum up their results ! How many a soul have they stirred to evil impulses ; how many a prayer have they stifled ; how many an emotion of true affection have they turned to bitterness ! How hard they sometimes make all duties ! How painful they make all daily life ! How they kill the warmest and sweetest of domestic charities ! The accumulated pain caused by ill temper must, I verily believe, if added together, outweigh all other pains that men have to bear from one another."

It is a true witness. We cannot calculate the injury wrought by this sin to ourselves or to others. It becomes a stumbling-block to every one who dwells under the same roof. In five minutes it breaks down the work wrought by days of prayer and effort. Above all, it brings great dishonour on

the Saviour's name, and grieves the Holy Spirit of God.

Blessed is the lad who knows how to keep down the rising temper, and to manifest in place of it the meek and gentle spirit of Christ.

But how shall you guard against this foe? How shall you, day by day, manifest something of the self-restraint, something of the gentleness, of the Lord Jesus?

*Let the peace of God bear sway within the citadel.* This is one of the great essentials. You want a quiet, happy spirit within. You want God's own peace to rule in your conscience, and over the whole territory of the inner man. If you know this peace which is found only in Christ, if you know the comfort of perfect reconciliation with God through His blood, if you abide in the peace of His presence and safe-keeping, you will have a power and a strength to resist an outburst of hasty feeling that you never can have otherwise.

The *peacetaker* will ever be the *peacemaker*. The one who by faith accepts the peace which Jesus gives, will in the main be prepared, by word and deed, to bring peace wherever he goes.

*Beware of hasty judgments on men's character and actions.* Remember how much may be behind that you do not know. Hear the other side before you are so confident that a great wrong has been committed against yourself or some one you love.

*Beware of proud, high thoughts of your own wisdom,* of what is due to you from others, of your own superiority in any respect over those connected with you. If we only remembered our failings and our frailties, if we only were more wont to sit down in a lower room, and to think of the mistakes we have made and the weakness we have exhibited, and the little we know compared to what we do not know, we should often be far less tempted to speak or act in a fit of passion or anger.

Then never forget that the greatest help to a calm, equable spirit is *to recognise the nearness of the Lord Jesus.* If some one whom you greatly respected, or one under whose authority you were placed, were in the room with you, you would hesitate before you manifested the rising temper, or permitted it to get the better of you. O that you would recognise the fact that Christ is always in the room, that He marks the angry scowl, and the fierce or passionate word which you are ready to speak! Look to Him, my young friend, to give you the victory. Live before Him, live in Him, and then you will in this and every other respect become like Him.

“Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe.” “Keep me as the apple of Thine eye.”

## XXVII.

*THE IMPORTANCE OF READING.*

"Give heed to reading."—*I Tim. iv. 13* (Revised Version).

"GIVE heed to reading." For it is one of the greatest talents committed to you. It may be to you a mighty power for the development of moral and intellectual gifts. It may open to you fields of untold worth, and put you in possession of information touching every branch of science, every region of the world, and every age of past history. It may make you tenfold more useful in any profession, because your reading has taken a wide range, and there are few matters of importance on which you are ignorant. Do not throw away these great opportunities. Do not lose the vantage ground which youth gives you.

*Give heed that you do read.* If you had in your possession a field where the soil was very rich, and where you might look for a large increase in whatever you sowed, it would be a thousand pities to leave it uncultivated, and so let it be covered

with weeds and thistles. Let not your field be neglected. Let not sloth and idleness win the day. In holiday time get hold of some book worth reading, and so, whilst the memory is retentive and the mind is fresh, take in knowledge that will be of more value than any amount of wealth. If you can only get an hour, or even half an hour a day for good solid reading, it is not to be despised. It will soon tell if you stick to it. And what you read carefully may not itself be the whole advantage you may gain, for it will be sure to suggest other trains of thought which may be worth to you even more than that which suggested them.

*Give heed how you read.* For much depends upon this. You may let your eye wander over the page of a book as a sort of duty or penance, as many do with their daily portion of the Scriptures. You may thus skim the surface, but find nothing of the profit you might derive from it, for you retain little or nothing of what you read. But avoid this mistake. Give mind and thought to it. And read also with discrimination. Separate the wheat from the chaff. Use your judgment as to the moral tendency of anything that is put into your hand. In the magazine literature of the day remember how much there is of downright Atheism and not a little Communism as well. To read this without the greatest care is perilous in the extreme.

And beside this, there lies a whole region of literature which is debasing and polluting beyond

all expression. Did you ever hear the dream of Gutenberg in the cloister of Argobasta? He was just about to put forward his invention of the printing press, and it seemed to him as if an angel came and spoke to him.

"John Gutenberg, thou hast made thy name immortal, but at what a cost! Think well what thou art doing! The ungodly are many more than the good. Thy work will but multiply their blasphemies and lies. Thou hast uncovered the bottomless pit. A swarm of seducing spirits shall henceforth come out like the brood of Abaddon and turn earth into hell. Oh think of millions of souls corrupted by thy achievement. See the poison of fiends distilled into the souls of boys and girls, making them old in the experience of sin! See that mother weeping over her depraved son, and that grey-haired father hiding his face from his daughter's shame. Destroy thy press, for it shall be the pander of blasphemy and lust. Destroy it, and forget it! Forbear, by multiplying the resources of the wicked, to make thyself through all ages the partaker of their crimes."

Gutenberg was nearly persuaded to destroy his invention, but he believed that God's gifts, though perilous, are never bad, and that the press might be a help in disseminating God's truth. So he went on, and printed the Bible as the first book that issued from his press.

We are all aware that the dream has had a very

sorrowful fulfilment. Amidst the vast amount of printed matter sent forth daily it is to be feared that the evil sadly exceeds the good. None can tell how the minds of multitudes are corrupted by the publications that they peruse. Therefore, my young brother, be careful.

*Give heed as to what you read.* If you knew that on the table there were poisoned dishes, as well as food that was wholesome and nourishing, you would be on your guard, and touch nothing about which you were doubtful. Exercise alike wise forethought as to the books and papers you take up and peruse.

It is true that "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he." But it is no less true that as a man readeth, so very much will he think. Mind, memory, conscience, imagination, will, affection, all will be influenced by that which you read.

The eye of a Christian lad ought not to be polluted by that which he would be ashamed to show his mother. The three-volume novel, with its picturing the worst passions of the soul, as too often is the case, ought not to be devoured as if it would leave no bad impress behind. I quite know we all need recreation, but it is not genuine recreation to spend hour after hour over that which is trashy, nonsensical, *and worse*, and will only unfit you for anything higher and better.

Think over what I have said. Most fervently

does the writer wish that in early life time wasted in profitless reading had only been redeemed for that which would have been helpful in days to come. No more frequent regret has he cherished than this. May you avoid the same mistake and follow the inspired precept—"Give heed to reading."

In connection with this subject one further hint may be given to those who are anxious to work in Christ's vineyard, and to do good in the Church and in the world. *Never forget the far-reaching influence of Christian literature.* Be a diligent worker in this direction. Carefully select books suited for various classes. Know the book, small or great, that will fill a special niche for the thoughtless one, for the inquirer, for one who is about to be confirmed, for one who is ill or who has lost a friend.

On a journey take a few sound and attractive booklets that you may be able to distribute wisely and with prayer. Take an interest in the support of such societies as the Religious Tract Society, the Church of England Book Society, and kindred associations. Perhaps in no other way may you be more likely to do real and abiding good.

## XXVIII.

*LIGHT IN DARK HOURS.*

**"But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."**—  
*1 Sam. xxx. 6.*

IT was one of the very darkest moments in David's chequered life. North, south, east, and west, wherever he looked, black clouds covered the sky. At the moment to which these words refer he had not one single ray of earthly comfort to cheer him. He was an exile from his own land for fear of Saul; he comes back to his home at Ziklag to find it burnt with fire. The Amalekites have invaded the land, and have taken captive his wives, his sons and daughters, and have spoiled him of all he possessed. His men also had suffered no less; so "David and the people lift up their voice and wept until they had no more power to weep."

But the prospect grows darker still. More trouble comes on apace. David's own followers turn against him. Though their captain and their best friend, though no fault of his had caused their loss, yet they look upon him as an enemy and speak of

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stoning him. Then shines out like a bright lamp the faith of this man of God. No comfort, no beam of hope, no friendly voice, no bit of sunshine or blue sky anywhere around ; but faith pierces the darkness and sees light beyond. He flies to God, and hides in Him. He bethinks him that he has in Jehovah a castle, a high tower, a dwelling-place, and to this he straightway turns. " David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." He thought of marvellous deliverances from the spear of Saul ; he thought of the faithful care and mighty help that had never yet failed him. He knew that God was his own God, who had made him great and sure promises. So in the hour of greatest distress he trusted and was not afraid.

And God honoured him for his brave and constant faith. We hear no more of his men stoning him. He traced the path of the enemy, and came upon them unawares, and recovered all. Nothing was lacking, and moreover he took great spoil. He found that " man's extremity is God's opportunity." His faith in God was strengthened, and he could go on his way rejoicing.

I take this subject because I know that it has a lesson for schoolboys. From my recollections of olden times, I know there are hours in school life when everything looks dark and cheerless. Sometimes a lad finds life a burden, from petty persecutions which he cannot escape. There may be some natural infirmity or peculiarity about him.

His appearance, or speech, or manner has something about it that causes remark. Or envy at his success makes him enemies, or his carefulness to avoid evil is a silent reproach to his schoolfellows. Something or other feathers the shaft, and he meets with perpetual annoyance. It is nothing very great as seen by an outsider, but it is very real and trying to the lad himself.

Like flies, gnats, or mosquitoes, which you cannot drive away, there come little irritations, vexations, and annoyances, rubs and cuttings, speeches and misrepresentations of what you say—why, a great, heavy sorrow would be nothing compared to these daily provocations which he must bear, and for which there is no help.

Or a lad's trial may take another shape. He may fail in his studies with the very best desires, and after his most persistent efforts ; so he may lose the position or the prize which he has set his heart on obtaining. He may seem neglected by the tutor, and imagine that cleverer lads get more care and attention than himself. Or his own home may be the cause of his sorrow. There may come a great blow. He may lose a beloved parent to whom he owes everything, or a favourite sister ; or there may be a secret trial in the family that weighs down his spirit, though he cannot speak of it to any one.

I know not what your trial may be, my young friend, but is there not something at times that sadly mars your peace ? Any way make David's

resource your own. Fly to God for help and comfort. Many a lad repines and murmurs, and *flies from God*; but do you *fly to Him*. However sinful and unworthy, do not try to hide from God, but by faith in Christ make Him your shelter and hiding-place. Like David, you must know God as your own God. And you can only do this by trusting in the Saviour's name, and in His all-sufficient mediation. Then you will be near and dear to Him as the apple of His eye.

*Encourage yourself in God.* Whatever you lose, whatever you lack, He will supply all you need. All things in earth and heaven are His, and if you trust in Him no good thing will He withhold.

*Encourage yourself in God.* Though beset with foes and fears, though disappointed and downcast, though standing alone like a pillar in the desert, yet hope thou in God. He is the Father of the fatherless, and the Friend of the friendless, and liftest up those that are bowed down. "If God be for us, who," or what, "can be against us?"

*Encourage yourself in God.* Though it be midnight with your soul, though neither moon nor stars appear, yet all things come to him who waits on God. He can turn the valley of Achor into a door of hope, and give thee thence vineyards of joy. Never was Joseph so near the throne as when in the dungeon. Therefore cast anchor in the dark, and hope to the end. "I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

## XXIX.

*NO NEUTRALITY.*

"He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad."—*Matt. xii. 30.*

I KNOW no lesson in the Christian life more important than this. You must be one thing or another. You must not attempt to serve two masters, or to imagine that you can stand aloof from either. You cannot do it. Listen to the words of the Son of Man. It is one of those sharp, cutting, separating words that levels to the ground all idea of escaping the battle and yet winning the crown. It teaches us that it is a delusion for a man to imagine he can be a Christian and yet let no one know it. Like so many other of our Lord's sayings, it takes the dividing-line and parts men hither and thither, as tares or wheat, as sheep or goats, as belonging to the army of the great King, or fighting under the banner of His enemy.

I have often used the words of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, on this matter, and will repeat them here. He was sorely tried by the

lukewarmness of the Protestant princes whose cause he had espoused. To the ambassador of one he said: "This I say unto you plainly beforehand, I will hear and know nothing of neutrality. His Highness must be friend or foe. When I come to his borders he must declare himself hot or cold. The battle is between God and the devil. Will his Highness hold with God? Let him stand on my side. Will he prefer to hold with the devil? Then he must fight against me. A third position will not be granted to him."

Is not the word of Christ the precise parallel to this—"He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad"?

But how may you be "with Christ"?

First of all, come to Him *as a scholar thirsting for knowledge would come to an eminent teacher* who has a marvellous power of imparting it. He hath said, "Learn of Me," and if you would be one of His, come to Him in heart and mind asking Him to inspire you with a love of His truth. Let Him be the Prophet to whom you will hearken. Let His words of life sink deep into your heart. Let one utterance from His lips weigh more with you than ten thousand lessons from any human teacher.

Whatever be the school to which you belong, never forget to frequent His school day by day. He will not turn you away because you are a dull scholar. He will breathe upon you His Divine

Spirit. He will enlighten you with true wisdom. He will instruct you and teach you both in the knowledge of God and of your duty towards Him and towards man.

But to be "with Christ" implies more than this. You must be with Him *as a needy sinner* with a *merciful and loving Saviour*. You have many sins, and He has a fountain of mercy in which to wash them all away. You have an evil nature, but He has grace to make you holy and pure like Himself. You have enemies, and temptations are around you, but He has power to protect and guard you. And He calls you to come to Him. He waits to receive and bless and save you. Therefore come to Him if you have never come before. Come to Him and trust His faithful promise, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Come to Him in prayer, and leave all that troubles you in His hand. Come to Him, and abide with Him evermore.

"Just as I am, Thy love unknown  
Hath broken every barrier down ;  
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come."

But go a step farther. You must be "with Christ" *as a true and valiant soldier with a trusty and victorious general*. This is your calling. You are pledged to fight manfully under the banner of His cross, and to "continue His faithful soldier and servant to your life's end." This implies a great deal. It means very much self-discipline.

It means a readiness to be a Christian when others throw off the service of Christ. A striking incident has been lately told of the late Sir Robert Peel, who ordered his carriage and left the room where he thought others had spoken words against Christianity. I am "still a Christian" was his witness for Christ. And though it would seem likely that he spoke under a misapprehension of what was passing, yet it was no less a noble proof of his loyalty to his Captain.

It is to this point the words of Christ apply. "He that is not with Me is against Me." You are fighting on one side or the other. You are striving to stem the current of vice and ungodliness, or you are adding to its force. You are most certainly taking your part in the struggle. For the battle is raging along the whole line. There is not a country or a city, a home or a heart, where Christ and the devil are not contending for the mastery. Therefore there is no room for neutrals. Moreover, to such a One as Christ indifference is the most terrible form of opposition. After the love and grace He manifested in His redeeming work, to pass Christ by on the other side is deadly sin. *It is ingratitude heightened by contempt.*

Therefore, whatever you are, be at least decided about it. Let there be no halting or wavering. Let no lurking unbelief or sloth keep you back from the ranks of Christ's army. Be a warrior in word and deed for the kingdom of truth and righteousness.

## XXX.

*GOD FIRST.*

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."—*Matt. vi. 33.*

IN these words we have the secret of a truly successful life. They were given by our Lord as an antidote for care and anxiety. He was surrounded by those who had but an uncertain and precarious livelihood. Most of them were fishermen, and, consequently, from day to day were dependent upon the catch they might have. So naturally they would be anxious about food and raiment and other needful things. But our Lord teaches them to look at the lilies and the fowls of the air, and to trust in a Father who knoweth all their need.

Then He gives the one right aim. He tells them how best they may ensure the supply of their daily wants, and freedom from the burden of care. It seems to the eye of sense a very circuitous path and a very doubtful one, but to the eye of faith it is seen to be the right and safe one. Our Lord would mean something of this kind: *Make it your chief*

*business to secure the kingdom of God and the righteousness in which you can stand before Him. Lay up treasures in Heaven. Seek in constant prayer His favour and blessing, and go forth into the world to honour Him, to extend His empire over the souls of men. Thus living for truth and godliness, leave the rest in your Father's hand. He will not forget you. He will not leave you short of anything that is truly needful or desirable. He will give you first a place in His favour, and in His kingdom, and the righteousness that will fit you for it. But He will give you more. These things shall be added unto you. If He give the best He will not withhold lesser things. He will give you food and raiment and all that He sees you to require. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Never forget that the possession of God's favour and righteousness is of first importance. Imagine, for a moment, a trial coming on in the law courts on which a very large property depended. It may be, an estate worth five thousand a year would be adjudged as yours, or would pass entirely into other hands. Many lesser matters you might have in hand, but should you not feel that till this was decided it was your wisdom to leave no stone unturned to secure a favourable issue? And you would be right in doing this. No man would blame you for taking the very utmost pains to secure property to which you believed you had a just claim.

Now apply this to higher things. There is an inheritance beyond all price for which you may put in your claim. It is an inheritance of peace, and heirship in God's kingdom, an inheritance of rich promises whose value none can determine, an inheritance of a life and glory which never fades. This you may gain or lose according as you act now. Is it not wise to give thought and time and real effort to make it your own ? Is it not wise to secure the one Advocate who never loses a cause, or fails a client that puts a case into His hands ?

Be assured, my young friend, that everything compared to this is mere child's play. Your brightest prospects, your most promising schemes of self-advancement, your highest honours at school or at the University, however really important they may be for this present life, are not to be weighed in the balance with the possession of the love of God and the everlasting consolation it ever brings with it.

Therefore let this bright star of divine truth be your guide. Seek first God, His kingdom, His righteousness, His favour, His peace.

A friend, whom I greatly esteem, was married some little time ago, and perhaps it might help you if I told you about something that occurred at the wedding breakfast. A few rich acquaintances had suggested that after their marriage he and his wife should give less time to Christian work, and go out more into the gaieties and amusements of the world.

So he told his future partner to put over the place where they would sit an illumination which had been sent to her from London as a present. So there it was put up just over their heads. "GOD FIRST." My friend, when thanking those present for their good wishes, pointed to this, and told them that it was the motto which he and his bride had determined to follow through life.

Let it be yours likewise. It will lead you to a noble and useful career. In whatever quarter of the world you may be, whatever your calling or profession—a soldier, a clergyman, a physician, a lawyer, a merchant, a tradesman; whether you may rise to a high position or tread a humble path, put GOD FIRST, and His presence and favour shall be as a crown of glory on your head.

Remember the promise—"Them that honour Me I will honour, but they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. ii. 30).

## XXXI.

*THE TRUE CHURCH.*

"We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."—*Phil.* iii. 3.

WE say in the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church," and there is a very close connection between the two clauses. But for the Holy Ghost the Church could never have arisen, continued, and spread as we know that it has. Though the Father gave the Son, and Jesus lived and died and rose again, and ascended to the Father, yet without the descent of the Spirit, and His continual working in the Church, there could never have been a body of faithful people, nor the possibility of such continuing amidst the perils to which the Church has been exposed.

But what is the Holy Catholic Church? As our Church teaches us, it is "the blessed company of all faithful people." It is the company of all those who love God, and are joined to the Lord Jesus by the link of true faith. In its essence it is a heavenly and spiritual body quickened by the

Holy Spirit from a death of sin ; crucified with Christ, risen with Christ, sitting in heavenly places with Christ now, and hereafter to appear with Him in glory.

The Church is described in Holy Scripture as a temple ; how is this temple formed ?

Christ is the one Foundation Stone. The soul lies heedless of and without spiritual perception or desire in the quarry of our corrupt and fallen nature. But the Holy Spirit awakens, arrests, and convinces of sin. Then further, the same Spirit leads the soul into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and fixes it on this Rock by a steadfast faith. So, one by one, through the years and ages, the Spirit brings many to Jesus. And what is the result ? A glorious Church ; all the living stones of this temple knit one to another, because all built on the one Foundation ; and thus is formed that Holy Catholic Church, which is the Habitation of the Triune Jehovah.

I am quite aware there is another view of the Church. As seen by the eye of man, as sojourning on earth, it must have its ordinances, its Pastors, its assemblies, its Sacraments ; and these are absolutely necessary to its well-being, and for the various purposes for which Christ provided them. And in this respect we ought greatly to love and value our own dear Church of England, and strive to preserve her in purity of faith and doctrine, and to seek her increase and stability. For my own

part, I cannot conceive a more blessed handmaid of the truth and a greater means of good to a country than our Church, if only administered on the lines of her Articles and her Book of Common Prayer, and if her ministers be imbued with the spirit that breathes in them.

But let me here add a word or two of caution. Whilst you love your Church, do not unchurch any who hold the great fundamentals of the faith as given in the Apostles' Creed. We are to value Episcopacy as most in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. But, with Hooker and many of our most eminent divines, we believe it to be for the benefit of the Church, but not essential to its existence.

Beware also of making too much of the Church as a visible institution. Just as it is the office of the Holy Spirit to bear witness not to Himself but to Christ, so is it with His Church. She is to witness *not to herself but to Him*. The golden candle-stick is nothing but as it holds up the light.

So the glory of the Church is not to exalt herself, and cry "The Church! the Church!" but to point away from herself to Christ, in all His variety of office and fulness of grace. Let Christ be her glorying, and God will honour the Church for His sake.

But we must never forget the difference between the Church as seen by the eye of man and by the eye of God.

"The Church, as seen by man, is the mixed mass

of the true and the false, good coin and base, the genuine and counterfeit people of God.

"The Church, as seen by God, is the unmixed company of those whose hearts are right before Him. It is the flock who hear the Shepherd's voice, and follow in His footsteps. It is those who are cleansed in His blood from guilt, and renewed in the inner man by the working of His good Spirit."

In the passage at the head of this chapter we have three distinct marks of such. The Apostle is describing those who are to be reckoned as God's people. The Jew gloried in circumcision, and accounted the Church of God to be limited to such as had received this rite. But Paul goes deeper. Those who have but the outward circumcision may be very far from God. But the true circumcision, the circumcision of the Spirit—this marks the Church of the saved. Then he names three points. And if you would know whether you are a member of the mystical body of Christ, the Church of the living God, whose names are written in heaven, try yourself by these three marks.

*"Which worship God in the Spirit."* Or, as in the Revised Version, "Who worship by the Spirit of God." Is this your worship? Are your prayers and praises offered by the aid of the Holy Ghost? Do you guard well your thoughts in devotion? Do you hate wandering thoughts, and watch against them? Do you come to God as a child to a tender Father? Do your hearty desires go with the words you utter? Do you thoroughly believe that the ear of God is

open to your petition, and do you look for an answer in His own time and way ?

“ And rejoice in Christ Jesus.” Or, as in the Revised Version, “ *And glory in Christ Jesus.*” Is this your rejoicing and glorying ? Do you glory in Christ as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ? Do you glory in Him as being the Rock, the Resting-place, the Refuge of your soul ? Do you glory in Him as being your great High Priest, your Shepherd, your King, your Redeemer ? Do you glory in His changeless love, in His unshaken fidelity, in His Almighty power to help and save ? Do you glory in Him as the source and spring of your happiness as well as your salvation and your hope ?

“ *And have no confidence in the flesh.*” Is this the case with yourself ? Have you cast aside all confidence in all that is merely external ? Have you learnt to put away all confidence in ordinances, duties, association with fellow-Christians, and all that is merely on the surface ? Have you refused to rely in the least degree on your zeal, or good feelings, or works, or gifts, or self-improvement, or prayers, that to you Christ alone may be all in all ?

Here was Paul’s ground of rejoicing—is it yours ? Are you a member of that Church of God’s true saints whose marks are such as these ? God grant that you may be ; for then you abide in the favour of God, and will hear at last the word of welcome, “ Well done, good and faithful servant.”

**XXXII.*****ON RECEIVING CHRIST.***

"As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name."  
—*John i. 12* (Revised Version).

A HEAVENLY Visitor has come into our world. He came as the Son of man that we might become sons of God. He came despised and rejected that we might gain glory and honour. He came willing even to die a death of shame and suffering that we might have life everlasting.

But how does man gain the blessing? How may you individually become a partaker of the benefits Christ has purchased for you?

Looking at it on the Divine side it is the work of the Holy Ghost. You need the Spirit from above to awaken you, to convince you of sin, to give you a desire for Christ and His salvation. And the same mighty Spirit comes to reveal Christ, to show you the preciousness of His blood to cleanse you, the sureness of His promises, and the prevailing power of His mediation at God's right hand.

But on man's side the connecting link is faith. The sacraments are the seal of faith, and openly testify of the union of the soul with Christ. But faith itself, true heart-faith, is the real tie that knits you to Christ. But what is this faith? Many views are given of it in Scripture, but none are clearer than that given in the passage above. It is "*receiving*" Christ. The two things, "*believing on Him*" and "*receiving Him*," are spoken as parallel one to the other. The one clearly defines the other. You remember how the Shunamite prepared a little room for Elisha, and then received him under her roof. You remember how Martha "*received*" Christ into her house, and how Zacchæus came down from the sycamore-tree in haste and joyfully received Him.

Though now unseen by us, Christ is nigh, and is willing to make His abode with sinners, with you or with me, if we be willing to receive Him.

How do you treat Him? He comes to your door in mercy and loving-kindness, but what is your response?

There are many ways of treating a visitor. You may shut the door in his face and refuse to let him pass the threshold. You may be courteous and polite, and yet too much occupied to give your friend a cordial welcome. Or you may give your hand with apparent warmth, and yet there is something behind, and your heart is not with him. Or you may receive your visitor with hearty goodwill,

and make it as plain as day that you delight to see him, and that the longer he stays the greater pleasure it will afford you.

The illustration may be a guide in the inquiry I want you to make. Do you really receive Christ or not? Is He a welcome guest?

It is not very likely that any one who reads these pages openly rejects Christ. But it is just possible. It may be you plainly shut the door against Him by breaking His commandments and throwing contempt upon His name. But another course is much more likely. Do you profess to receive Him, and yet in the deep of your heart reckon Him an intruder? Do you go to His house, and perhaps even to His Table, and yet all the time secretly dislike spiritual things, and perhaps never think of Christ all the week through? Is there some one or something else that has the chief place in your affections? Is Herodias in the palace, whilst the faithful Monitor is kept in the prison? Is there an occasional remembrance of Him, whilst at all other times there is a barrier between you and Him?

Or do you welcome Christ, heart and soul—willing at any time and at all times to have Him with you; yielding up to Him the best chamber; yea, every chamber of the inner man? Is it your greatest joy to have Him near you, and your greatest sorrow when He seems at a distance?

Make quite sure about this point. It is the

very hinge of life or death. To reject Christ is to abide in your sins. To receive Him is to find peace and salvation.

Mark the promise—"As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." What a glorious privilege thus becomes your own! In the very highest sense you become a son of the Most High. You are well-pleasing to Him in Christ. You are regarded with tender, fatherly affection. You receive the spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, "Abba, Father."

If this blessing be yours, you have an unfailing source of consolation. Whatever may occur, you have always a refuge to flee to.

You may be lonely and desolate at times, but God will comfort you by the assurance of His presence. You may be treated unkindly by those about you, but God's loving-kindness will never fail. You may be misunderstood or falsely accused of something concerning which you are quite innocent, but in His own way and time your Father will see you righted, or at least make even this work together for good. Therefore be of good courage. Never forget the words of the Psalmist, "Like as a father pitith his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear Him" (Ps. ciii. 13).

## XXXIII.

*CHRIST DWELLING WITHIN.*

"I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me ; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."—*Gal. ii. 20* (Revised Version).

THE great truth here laid down is one of the most practical to be found in Holy Scripture. It gives the only true force and power by which you rise above the world. If you have read anything of the inner life of that brave hero who was lately killed at Khartoum, and whose name has become a household word all over our land, you cannot fail to be struck with the secret of his noble and beautiful Christian life. For unflinching courage in the greatest perils, for utter indifference to the praise of man, for unselfish devotedness to the call of duty, for a self-denying philanthropy, that could care for the waifs and strays of London or a poor suffering African woman, for a steadfast perseverance in well-doing even unto death—for all this, perhaps we may say he has no equal in our own day and generation.

But what was the spring of it ? It was his firm

faith in the Lord Jesus, in His sympathy, in His Divine power, and very specially in His indwelling presence in the soul.

Of this latter he often spoke and wrote, and it was that one truth, above all others, which he found to be strength in difficulty and in danger.

Perhaps till lately this truth of the indwelling presence of God in man scarcely received the measure of thought and attention it deserved. But it is one very plainly revealed. Go to the prophet Isaiah, and you scarcely find anywhere a grander promise than that which refers to this (lvii. 15) : " Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Side by side with this you have the words of Christ in John xiv. 23 : " If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

The same teaching is carried on in the words of Paul given at the head of this chapter : "*I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.*" And this indwelling of Christ we are told is by the Holy Spirit. " What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own ? " (1 Cor. vi. 19.)

Taken in connection with each other, we see how in some way, far beyond our comprehension, the true Christian is the shrine of the Deity, the sanctuary in which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit take up their abode.

You remember the parable of the palace of the strong man, when a stronger than he comes upon him and takes away his armour and divideth the spoil. Thus is it with the soul. Satan is cast out of the palace, and Christ sets up His throne in his place. He dwells within by His Spirit, and becomes the source of a new power and a new life. The old self is crucified, the world is dethroned, the dominion of sin is cast down, and Christ Himself lives and abides and works mightily in the inner man.

Here is the power by which it is possible for you to live a holy, a joyful, and devoted life. In yourself, from first to last, you have no strength or ability to conquer evil or walk in the path of godliness. But if Christ be in you, if He has taken up His abode within, then He will manifest His presence in your daily walk and conversation. He will use your members as instruments of righteousness. With your eyes He will spy out the poor and needy; with your ears He will hearken to the cry of the sorrowful and distressed; with your feet He will go hither and thither on errands of mercy; with your hands He will feed the hungry and

clothe the naked, and do such good works as may be according to the will of God. But still more. The presence of Christ within will be to you a spring of zeal and sympathy, of prayer and of praise. With this indwelling guest the soul will delight to commune with the Father above. You will become in everything more conformed to the image of the Son of God, and thus be made meet for the inheritance of the saints above.

But how can you live out this grand ideal of life ? Don't imagine it is only for a few very eminent saints, who can separate themselves from worldly affairs, and give their time to perpetual prayer and meditation. It is nothing of the kind. It is for you, in the midst of school duties and school temptations ; in the midst of cricket and football, and daily studies, and a thousand interests that cluster around you. You are not to imagine these are to be neglected, but only you are to let this great principle and power come in and guide you in everything. But how is it to be done ? In one way only. *By the exercise of faith.* Look at two petitions in the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians. They are both closely connected together. "To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that *Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*" (Eph. iii. 16, 17). In proportion to your faith Christ dwells in the heart, and you are strengthened by the Holy Ghost. Hence the need of abiding, constant faith in Christ.

Oh, if you wish to be strong and happy, and brave to conquer all evil, "live in faith." Trust in Christ as the Son of God, exalted to the Father's right hand, to put beneath your feet all that hinders your course. Trust in Christ as the one who loved you, even you, when He died on the cross for your sins, and who loves you at this moment with a tender, watchful love. Trust in Christ, who gave Himself up for you, and who will therefore assuredly give you His Spirit and every good thing. And as you trust Him as the unchangeable Friend and Saviour, exalted far above all heavens, so believe also that He dwelleth in you by His Spirit now and evermore.

## XXXIV.

*THE EYES OF JEHOVAH AND THE  
EYES OF MAN.*

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him."—*2 Chron. xvi. 9.*

"O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee."—*2 Chron. xx. 12.*

IT has long seemed to me that there is exceeding beauty and very much help in linking together these two passages. You have the eyes of God looking down in mercy on His child, and you have the eyes of the poor, needy, helpless child looking up in humble confidence and hope. You have the great Father spying out His own, possibly far removed from any who can cheer and strengthen him; and then you have the trembling anxious believer casting an upward glance of faith and expectation toward the mercy-seat. Both sides are full of Divine instruction to such as desire to spend their life in the fear and love of God.

Consider first the merciful eyes of Jehovah look-

ing down from above. Take in this grand truth in all its rich fulness of blessing. Where is there one in any quarter of the world whose "heart is perfect toward God"? That is, where is there one who relies upon God's promises in Christ, and who makes it his aim to honour and please Him?

Upon such a one the merciful eyes of a God of love are fixed. All the wide world over is this true. There may be but one servant of God in a house, or one in a village, or even in a dark, be-nighted land, but to discover and find out such the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth.

This truth is for you, my young brother, if the fear of the Lord is reigning in your heart. And it will be true for you in the years that may lie before you. In days to come you may be dwelling all alone, or in the midst of those with whom you can have no sympathy. You may be cast adrift by life's storms on some barren shore of failing means or depressing trial. You may be the prisoner of a darkened chamber, or be shut up for months in a merchant vessel crossing the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean. You may be a worshipper of the true God in a land of idols, or your lot may be cast as a Christian soldier amongst scenes of war and bloodshed.

But those eyes are still upon you for good. They are ever on the look-out to mark your cares, your wants, your difficulties, and your sorrow. And more than this. Where the eyes of the Lord are, there

too are *His outstretched arm and mighty hand*. Not only do His eyes behold in pity the woes and weakness of His child, but He is present in power to perform that which His eyes discern to be requisite. "The eyes of the Lord run . . . to show *Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him.*" Still more forcible is the reading in the margin, "*Strongly to hold with those whose heart,*" &c.

My young friend, rejoice in this. Your Father's eye beholds you in loving kindness. Your Father's hand is with you to do all that you need. That hand can uphold you when falling, and can raise you up when in the very depths. That hand can ward off every threatening blow, and utterly beat down the cruel enemy of your soul. That hand can strengthen you for the work that lies before you, can clear away high mountains of difficulty, and can make you more than conqueror over the most persistent temptations. Yea, it can hold you up through the river of death, and set you at last before His face in the land of light and love.

Thank God, you have an Almighty Guardian who strongly holds with you, and can maintain your cause even to the end. If others scorn you and turn from you, if they will not hold with you because you serve the Lord, be not troubled nor cast down. God is with you. His eye is upon you. His arm, His hand, His presence are enough. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

But look at the other side. If the eyes of Jehovah bend downward, the eyes of His child look upward. The upward look meets the downward, and fear and troubles are scattered to the winds, and the soul can glory in God the Saviour. No strength is ours. No counsel is ours. But in Him we have both the one and the other. "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, *but our eyes are upon Thee.*"

Read the whole story in 2 Chron. xx., and you will see what a marvellous deliverance was granted to Jehoshaphat through this confidence.

And his God is our God. Only let there be the same spirit in you that there was in him. Your spiritual foes are many and great, and you must remember that you have no might in which to overcome. You may not know the right course to pursue when tempted and harassed by subtle snares. But uplift to Him the eye of faith. By the upward look put everything into the hand of your mighty Helper. Failure may hitherto have attended your struggles and your efforts, but this need not discourage you if only now you will learn the lesson to expect nothing from self, but everything from Jesus. Look upward continually both for help and guidance. "Our eyes are upon Thee!" "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net."

Catch this spirit, and carry it out under all that happens to you.

God's eye is upon you in tender, considerate loving-kindness. Let your eye be upon Him in patient hope. Imagine a little child in danger through some impending evil or sore trouble, and, too alarmed and terrified to speak, it fixes the eye on a father or mother near. What loving parent could neglect or refuse the silent appeal ? If there were a spark of love in that parent's heart, would not the very utmost effort be made to shield or comfort that child ? And with love ten thousand-fold more than ever dwelt in the heart of father or mother, and with a power sufficient to cope with all possible evils, will not our Father respond to the look of His troubled child ?

“ As nurse or parent, with a watchful eye,  
Doth guide the wayward steps of infancy,  
So do Jehovah's eyes run to and fro  
*Through all the earth*, His saving power to show ;  
That all, where'er they be, may learn to trust,  
Knowing the helplessness of sinful dust.  
Only, O Lord, in mercy grant that we  
May fix our eyes in confidence on Thee,  
Feeling that when we know not what to do,  
Thou art our Counsellor, both kind and true.”

## XXXV.

*THE HOLY COMMUNION.*

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—*Matt. xviii. 20.*

THERE are two views of the Lord's Supper, neither of which ought to be forgotten. The central idea is the remembrance of the death of Christ. Our Church puts it very beautifully in the exhortation addressed to the communicants. "To the end that we should alway remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which, by His precious blood-shedding, he hath obtained for us, He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, to our great and endless comfort."

No less strongly is this view of the ordinance brought before us in the consecration prayer, in the words spoken on giving the bread and wine, and also in the Catechism. Some persons put aside as a very small matter this idea of remembrance. But it is not so. Our Lord put it in the

forefront, and so likewise does our Church in the whole service. In fact, the remembrance of Christ in the Supper is the root and spring of all the benefits which are found in the reception of it.

The importance of *remembrance* stands out very clearly in the Word. With respect to this point study the Book of Deuteronomy. The sins of Israel are all traced to their forgetfulness of God. The call is perpetually to remember. Paul likewise tells us that salvation depends upon remembrance. "By which (*i.e.*, Gospel) ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you" (1 Cor. xv. 2). So a true remembrance of the Lord Jesus, awakened by the Spirit of remembrance (John xiv. 26), becomes a mighty power in the soul.

*It deepens contrition and humility.* Think of the Saviour stooping so low to bear your guilt. Think of your sins as fixing the nails in His hands and feet, and encircling His head with the crown of thorns. Think of all the shame and the anguish which fell upon Him through your iniquities, and this more than anything will lead you to own and hate the evil you have done.

*It gives peace to the troubled conscience.* Nothing gives such assurance of free and perfect forgiveness as a believing remembrance of the Lamb of God. To see His wounds, to see His blood shed upon the cross and sprinkled before the mercy-seat for you, assures you that your iniquity is forgiven, and your sin covered.

*It awakens lively gratitude.* Who can remember the Saviour's love in His self-sacrifice without desiring to love Him more? If Christ did so much and bore so much for my salvation, shall I not give Him my whole heart, and strive to go forth and win the souls He died to save?

And this thought of remembrance may point out who are invited to His Table. It may show you plainly whether you have a right to draw near. For who is the worthy communicant? It is he who desires to remember Christ. Ask yourself, Do I remember Christ through the week? Do I remember His precepts, His promises, His presence? Is it a pleasure to me to think of Him when I lay my head on my pillow at night, when I arise in the morning, in my prayers, in my daily duties, in my troubles and difficulties?

If so, you may feel sure you are a welcome guest at His Table. Though you may feel conscious of great failures in duty, and many falls in your walk, yet if you grieve over them, and your heart is towards Christ, you may come to His Table, and be sure that He will give you fresh strength and peace and blessing.

And this leads us to the second view of the Holy Communion. It is a season when Christ Himself will meet with you. The promise at the head of this chapter is never more graciously fulfilled than at this Feast. We are to believe in the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper. Yet not a Presence in

the elements, but in the heart. Not the Presence of Christ as dying, but as risen, and living for evermore. And it is by the light of the Holy Spirit that the Presence of Christ is realised in the Eucharist.

*It is the Holy Spirit that calms the mind, and removes the veil of earthly things.* The soul disturbed by care or passion, or the love of the world, is shut out from the vision of God. But when the Spirit drives these away, it is possible to see Him who is invisible. Those who are pure in heart can see God even here. When the mists roll away, the Sun of righteousness shines within.

*The Holy Spirit opens the eye to see Christ very close at hand at His Table.* He hath said, "The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me." Especially may we look for this manifestation of Christ when we obey His last command, and eat the bread and drink the wine that point to Him. When next you draw near, believe that in love He stands very nigh. Be sure that He is there in the midst. Be sure that He is with thee of a truth. It is thus that He shows His marvellous loving-kindness. He is with thee at His Table. He shows the light of His countenance. He feeds and nourishes the soul that by faith partakes of the emblems of His death. He strengthens; He consoles; He quickens.

Therefore prize and value this sacred Feast. Never neglect it. Never turn away from it. But come again and again. Come in a spirit of faith, looking unto Jesus in your heart. Come in a spirit

of devout thankfulness, praising Him for all His grace and love. Come in a spirit of brotherly love, reckoning all who come to that Table as members with you in the household of God.

“See, the feast of love is spread,  
Drink the wine and break the bread ;  
Sweet memorials, till the Lord  
Call us round His heavenly board—  
Some from earth, from glory some,  
Severed only till He come.”—E. H. B.

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Further instruction with respect to the Holy Communion may be found in two manuals by the author, “Beneath the Cross” and “The Holy Table,” both published by Messrs. Nisbet.

## XXXVI.

## SELFISHNESS.

"Am I my brother's keeper?"—*Gen. iv. 9.*

INTENSE selfishness breathes in this question. Whosoever acts in the spirit of it knows nothing whatever of the power of true religion. Yet we fear it is a spirit that reigns in the world, and on all sides is hindering the kingdom of Christ and increasing the sorrow and misery that abounds.

When man fell away from God, at once there arose separation between man and man. If a planet should lose the attraction of the sun and thus forsake its orbit, it might at once clash with some other planet and thus cause untold mischief. Thus when the soul loses the attraction of God's love and departs from Him, at once strife and division comes into the world, and the earth is filled with hatred, envy, and violence. Then comes the question of Cain, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"

You remember the man that fell among thieves. There he lay, wounded and half dead, stripped of his raiment; and had no friendly hand come to his

aid, the end had not been far off. But here come priest and Levite, and they see him in his misery, but they pass on their way and leave him to perish. They say in their heart, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"

A ship is drifting on the wide ocean, having lost its rudder and its mast, and unable to reach the shore. Another ship passes not a mile off and her disabled condition is seen, but the captain cares only for his own ship and his own interest, and leaves her to her fate. "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"

Half-a-dozen betting men are on their way to a race. They are clever at "keeping a book," and it is not their fault if they do not carry off substantial gains. But a word is spoken to them on the sorrow that comes through gambling on many a wife and child, and how often, through this snare, the happy home is broken up, and life-long poverty dogs the steps of one who might otherwise have lived and died in peace and comfort. But what is all this to them? Each man must look out for himself. If I get a few hundreds more, why shall I trouble about those who lose? "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"

The same thing occurs in school life. What terrible cruelty is sometimes inflicted on another through practical jokes which would never have been planned or carried out if there had been the very least regard for the feelings of another.

Often a younger lad is initiated into all sorts of evil, which never would have been done had the

elder lads remembered the great responsibility that rested upon them with respect to those under their influence.

Oftentimes the weak, retiring, or timid lad is put at an immense disadvantage through the rough conduct of one who lords it over others wherever he can. In a thousand ways—in the dormitory, in the playground, and elsewhere—lads forget what they owe to those about them. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” is the language both of lip and action.

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” Never forget that this was the language of a murderer, and, in fact, revealed the spirit of murder that prompted the death of his brother. And he who acts on this principle now is little better than a murderer in God’s sight. One may kill another by his neglect or indifference, as well as by a blow or a knife. Yea, and many a lad has committed something worse than murder; for, by his conduct towards another, he has brought a blight upon his whole life and prospects, he has destroyed his character, and, it may be, has been the ruin of his soul.

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” Of course you are. Every man is your brother, and because of the tie of brotherhood, you are appointed of God to do all you can for him. It may be one who lives under the same roof, or the far-off Chinaman whom you have never seen; but to the utmost of your power you are to care for him and do him

good. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Let this be a fixed rule and principle in your life, to regard every one as a friend and brother or sister, and to seek their good to the utmost of your ability. Try in this to follow the example of Christ. It will add immensely to your own happiness, and bring down no small blessing on others. Especially have a care for those who are younger, or weaker, or less advanced than yourself. Stand up bravely for those who cannot protect themselves. Shield the inexperienced from the devilish arts of those who would persuade them to evil. Give a timely warning to those whom you see likely to fall.

And commit yourself, body and soul, to the care of that Elder Brother who loves to do a brother's part. He will never throw off the claim which faith has upon Him. He will be your keeper and guardian by night and by day. He will keep you even to life eternal.

XXXVII.*A PRAYER FOR GODLY LIVING.*

"Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God : let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth unto the land of righteousness."—*Ps. cxlii. 10* (P. B. Version).

IT has always seemed to me that a godly life is here put before us in a very attractive form. It is not put as a performance of certain duties. It is not simply obedience to God's command. It is pleasing a kind and merciful Father. And there is a joy in doing this. A child who loves a parent finds a delight in pleasing such a one, and receiving the tokens of his approbation. And if you love your Father in heaven, you will be able to please Him, and He will show His acceptance of your efforts, and by fresh tokens of His love encourage you to serve Him still more perfectly. It was Christ's joy thus to please the Father. See what He says: "He that sent Me is with me ; the Father hath not sent Me alone, *for I do always those things which please Him*" (John viii. 29).

Will you not make this your aim, and thus follow

in His footsteps? It is no hard bondage, but a path of true peace and blessing, to please Him whose name is Love. It is this to which Paul exhorted the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thess. iv. 1). We "exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God, so ye would abound more and more."

If you wish to please God, *you must put your whole confidence in the Lord Jesus.* Nothing is more pleasing to the Father than when He sees you trusting His Son. Therefore trust Jesus to cleanse you in His blood and to keep you from all sin. Trust Him to help you in school work and in the daily crosses you have to bear. Trust Him about everything—about the least and greatest matters that concern you. This honours Christ more than anything, and therefore pleases the Father.

Then, if you wish to please God, *remember you may do so in everything.* Every time you kneel down and offer your morning or evening prayer, every time you go to Church or your School Chapel, every bit of Latin or Greek you have to translate, every sum you do, every act of kindness to another—yes, and every meal you enjoy and every walk you take—in everything you may please God if you desire to please Him. And endeavour to do all in His sight. Some persons are very hard to please, even if you do your best. But your Heavenly Father delights to accept anything you do as ser-

vice to Him, if only you love and fear Him. And here is your truest happiness—

“The truest will is God’s own will ;  
Rest on this anchor and be still :  
For peace around thy path shall flow  
Whilst only seeking here below  
What pleases God.”

But if you wish to please God, He will give abundant aid and strength. We are reminded of this by the prayer which is here put into our lips. “*Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee ; . . . let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.*” You will not be left to yourself. His own loving Spirit will teach and lead you. Right along your pilgrimage the Comforter will direct and strengthen you until you have done with sin and the world and reach the land where evil can find no entrance.

There are many ways in which the Spirit will thus assist you. He will give you a quick sight to discern the least sin, wherever it may attack you. He will put you on your guard against temptation before it comes. He will give a desire to do what is right, and then add the power and perseverance needful to fulfil it. He will enlighten you in the fuller knowledge of God’s precepts, and transform you in heart and spirit to walk in Christ’s footsteps. He will remind you of a duty you have forgotten, or of a vow you have failed to keep. He will remove

hindrances out of your path, and make your way plain before your face.

Touching this point, Dr. Kay gives an interesting translation of the latter part of the prayer we are considering: "*Let Thy good Spirit lead me along a level land.*" Surely this is no slight benefit when the Spirit casts away stumbling-blocks out of our path. He removes a doubt that has crept into the heart, or gives a clearer view of the right course when one duty seems to conflict with another, and both we cannot perform.

Then, too, it is the good Spirit which draws the heart back to God when something for a moment has turned you aside. It is the good Spirit which helps the Christian in prayer, and enables him to realise the nearness of Christ, and stirs him up to faith and earnestness. It is the good Spirit which meets the servant of the Lord when he is sorely cast down, and by some word of promise sends him on his way rejoicing.

Without the aid of the Holy Spirit you never could please God even for a moment, but by His grace you may please Him more and more till your life's end.

My young friend, are you striving to please God ? Have you been trying to do so this past week ? What about Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and the other days of last week ? What witness do they bear about this matter ? Be not content with following the stream, and getting through your work

because you do not wish to make trouble for yourself. Rise higher than this. Day by day make it your distinct purpose to please God, and where you fail, own it, and seek the free forgiveness which God ever waits to give.

Be sure of this—unless you please God on earth, you cannot be with Him in heaven. You could not be fit for His presence, neither would it give you joy to be with One whom you had never loved or served below. Therefore do not please yourself. Do not make it your chief aim to please your masters, or even your parents. But every day and every hour seek to please God.

## XXXVIII.

## CONSISTENCY.

"We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."—*Dan.* vi. 4.

It was a noble testimony. Here was Daniel in high position, as a city set on a hill that could not be hid. He was a sort of viceroy of the whole kingdom, and more than a hundred lynx-eyed enemies were ever around him, watching to discover in him some cause of offence. Though in a heathen court temptation must have abounded on every side, yet these bitter foes have to confess that he is blameless in all the matters intrusted to his charge. His foot stands firm in the paths of truth and equity. Nothing of falsehood, nothing of double-dealing, nothing of injustice can be laid to his charge. Blessed are they who have something of a like spirit! Consistency of life and walk is one of the most effective arguments that can be used to persuade men of the truth of the religion we profess. It is far away the best sermon that can be preached. It is to this the Apostle Paul exhorts the Philippian

Church : "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (ii. 15). "Were all Christians," it has been said, "but thoroughly consistent for twenty-four hours, the mouth of every infidel would be stopped."

And facts continually come out which show the convincing power of this grace. A young Englishman was travelling to a distant station in North-West America. For a fortnight or three weeks he had to travel by a boat which was rowed by half-a-dozen native Christians. The young man was himself living quite a careless life. But when he watched these men and noticed how careful they were in their language and conduct, in their observance of Sunday, in their morning and evening devotions, he was led to deep conviction of his own sinfulness, and a desire to live a better life. "What a shame it is for me," he said to himself, "after being brought up in a Christian country, to be living as I have been, whilst these men, who were born heathens, are so different to myself." It was a lesson he never forgot, and it led him into an entirely new course.

But what is consistency ? It is the whole life in harmony. It is a constant painstaking effort in everything to do the will of God. It is not a field partly wheat and partly tares. It is not a tree with living branches and dead. It is not

a patched garment partly old and partly new. It is not a lamp of which half the glass or globe is blackened by smoke. It is a life which is all one thing. On Monday as on Sunday, at home as in society, in the playground as in the schoolroom, with young companions as with relations, a hundred miles away as in the place where you live, keeping a good conscience towards God and man, hating everything that is corrupt and evil, and striving manfully and bravely to do your duty in the station where God has placed you. Such is consistency. The light shines steadily. It is not the track of the comet, but the bright ray of the fixed star.

How may you thus live day by day ? How may you thus honour God and benefit His Church ?

You must have a deep root to your religion. Look at Daniel. *He was a man of genuine faith.* "No manner of hurt was found upon him because he believed in his God" (Dan. vi. 23).

*He was a man who knew and confessed his sins* (ix. 20). Though so blameless before men, yet he was deeply conscious how far he fell short of God's holy law.

*He was a man who had great value for prayer.* He desired his companions to join him in prayer on one occasion (ii. 17, 18). And when it was at the peril of his life, he prayed and gave thanks thrice a day.

If you wish to live a consistent life as Daniel

did, you must be well rooted and grounded in God's faith and fear. Go deep down. Look for the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, to give you a true sight of your sin and to teach you humbly to repent of it. Seek grace firmly to believe all God's gracious promises to you in Christ. And cherish a spirit of prayer. Pray often if you cannot pray long. Never neglect your prayer morning and evening, and, like Daniel, try to steal a quiet moment in the midst of the day when you can afresh look up to God for grace and help.

Then, if you want to be consistent, *watch against every disturbing force*. Whatever seems likely to turn you out of the straight path, most jealously cast aside. Greediness of gain, the dazzling blaze of the world's attractions, love of praise, a secret envy of one preferred to yourself, or of one who beats you in the examination, hasty tempers, irritability, your own special besetment, perhaps a liability to unchaste thoughts or words; self in any shape, self-will, self-confidence, selfishness, self-assertion, the fear of man, pride, lightness at wrong times, murmuring, impatience, depression, unbelief—anything, my young brother, that brings a cloud between you and God, or that may impair your witness for the Master—by His grace trample upon it and keep it down as your worst enemy.

Never reckon anything small. Be it a sin to be avoided, or a duty to be performed, the very least

matter may affect your whole life. Therefore mind little things. A grain of dust may impair your sight and make you fall. The smallest neglect or sin may work terrible havoc in your soul.

“Every day and every hour,  
Every gift and every power,  
Consecrate to Him alone  
Who hath claimed you for His own.”

## XXXIX.

*THE PRICELESS PEARL.*

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."—*Matt. xiii. 45, 46.*

WE should ever regard the Gospel of Christ as bringing to man a treasure of exceeding value. It never comes to rob man of one single source of true enjoyment, but it does bring in its hand benefits and blessings that far outweigh all others. It is the great lesson of this and the preceding parable.

A man finds in a field hidden treasure, and he goes his way to purchase the field that he may not lose that which he has found. A merchant goes from shore to shore to search for pearls. Each pearl he carefully examines, and not a few costly ones he finds. At last he lights upon one far, far superior to all seen before. So large, so brilliant, so pure, so free from blemish is this pearl, that to possess it becomes his one desire. But the price is high. All he has must be sacrificed for the purchase. But he has no hesitation. He makes no delay. He dare not risk the loss of it. "If I have

but this," he would say to himself, "untold wealth is mine." So the rest go, and in the possession of the one pearl, he goes on his way rejoicing.

Oh, that men had eyes to discern that which is truly precious ! Alas ! for the false estimate men form of things. That which is but of little worth is reckoned worthy of their pursuit night and day ; whereas that which is far beyond the whole world in value is cast aside and despised as a thing of nought.

But what is this "pearl of great price?" Wherein consists its great value ? Let me put it in this way. Suppose for a moment a jewel to possess some rare and marvellous properties. In fairy tales we have read of such things, and in the matter of which I am speaking there may be more truth in it than we might think.

Imagine this gem to have the power of ensuring to its possessor far more wealth than others around. Moreover, it confers an attractiveness and beauty on the one who wears it that few can resist. Still better, it ever brings with it peace of mind, safety from accident, victory in the day of battle, and the scythe of death can never harm the one who has it on his person.

Such a jewel many a one would crave, and give all they had to make it their own.

But in the very highest sense does not the true pearl, the knowledge and love of Christ, bring

every one of these benefits to the soul that lays hold upon it ?

It brings gold tried in the fire, faith and hope and love, and in Christ the heirship of all things. It adorns the one who receives it with the likeness of the Redeemer, and thus he becomes glorious in the eyes of all holy beings. It tells of peace, the very peace of God that passeth understanding, even when everything below is full of pain and sorrow. It brings fullest security, for not a hair of your head shall perish if you are Christ's. Nor can death touch you, for death is but the gate of life to every one that believeth.

Nor does the benefit end here. Imagine to yourself any source of lawful ambition and desire, in the highest and most durable form of it, it will be found with him who chooses Christ as his portion. Is it knowledge, true pleasure, friendship, home affection, congenial occupation, a name that shall never be forgotten, the run of the palace, power to do a vast amount of good in the world ? All these will assuredly be yours if you make your own this treasure of which I speak.

But how shall you make it your own ? How may you claim it as that which none shall ever take from you ? There must be a deliberate choice. Salvation is free, perfectly free, so that the beggar or the slave may at once take Christ for their own, if only they desire it. Yea, and the soul that is conscious of its own utter poverty and bondage to some form of evil may receive Christ, for righteous-

ness, for spiritual riches, for freedom, for life, for all, and this by a simple act of humble trust in His name.

But there comes another side of truth. Wherever there is true faith, there will also be self-sacrifice. Christ has said it: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 33).

Think of Moses. The three glittering prizes that the world thinks most about—these were in his hand. High position, the pleasures of sin, the treasures of Egypt all were his, yet he parts with all. He reckoned the reproach of Christ greater riches than all else. So he chose rather affliction with the people of God, than all he might otherwise have enjoyed (Heb. xi. 24–26).

Think of Paul. A wise merchantman was he. The pearl he found, and the pearl he kept, though for it all else was forsaken. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. iii. 7, 8).

Will you be wise also? Will you learn to take a true view of the Christian's hope and privilege? Will you let faith rule instead of sight? Will you look up for the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to correct your estimate of things as you have regarded

them in the past, and to reveal to you the unsearchable riches of Christ ? Will you so prize Christ as your wealth, your joy, your spring of purest delight, your crown and diadem of honour, that you are willing for His sake, if need be, to say good-bye to all that once was most attractive in your eyes ?

Will you say to Him from your very heart, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee ?"

"And the world deceived and foolish call  
Him, who for one jewel gave his all ;  
But, unheeding what they think or say,  
Glad and satisfied he goes his way.

Wondrous blessings reach him from above ;  
Love comes down to meet the heart of love ;  
Ever as he views his treasure bright,  
And his soul is filled with life and light."

## XL.

*"A SINGLE EYE."*

"The lamp of thy body is the eye : when thine eye is single thy whole body also is full of light ; but when it is evil thy body also is full of darkness."—*Luke xi. 34* (Revised Version).

I WELL remember a Sunday-school teacher in London who, when past sixty, was not tired of his work. He was a man of fixed character and steadfast purpose in the service of Christ. His occupation was that of a clerk in a large business house, and here, as elsewhere, it was his desire and aim to do all for the glory of God. So with his penknife he cut out on the desk where he worked these three words, "A SINGLE EYE." He wished them to be ever before him, and it was his daily and hourly petition that he might carry them out in his daily life.

There is no grace more precious than this. Let it be your aim to cultivate it all through life. Let this grace of "a single eye" be manifest in you, and it will add to life a beauty and a glory which will affect everything you say or do. It will help you in your daily walk, and others will see in you

more of the reality and power of God's grace than they have ever seen before. It will help you in your school work and in all your studies. If you make it your main desire in these to honour and please God, so to do them that you may the better serve Him in the life-work that lies before you, you cannot fail of your reward. You may succeed or fail in obtaining position or distinction, but in either case your work will be owned and accepted of your Father in heaven.

Think of the words of the Lord Jesus : "The lamp of thy body is the eye: when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when it is evil, thy body also is full of darkness." When the natural eye is clear and good, it is like a lamp to the whole body. It guides the hand and the foot, and directs a man in the way in which he should move and walk. But when the eye sees double, or is clouded or dim, it impedes all action, and leads often to the greatest danger and mischief.

It is so with the inner eye of the soul, that is, the aim and intention with which we act. We need that it be set on serving and pleasing God, and Him only. We must not serve two masters, or look two ways, or mingle an earthly motive with a heavenly one. We must watch lest covetousness, selfishness, pride, ambition, the love of human praise, or any other wrong temper or disposition turn us aside or get the upper hand even for a moment. We must put God first, seek His glory

and His kingdom as our primary object, and then the whole life and conduct will be in accordance with His will and bring with it a sure reward.

We have an excellent commentary on the meaning of our Lord's words in Eph. vi. 5-7. St. Paul is writing to servants, and he exhorts them to the manifestation of this grace : " Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, *in singleness of your heart*, as unto Christ ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good-will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men."

Here is the "single eye :" you must look away from man. You must not act as beneath the eye of a fellow-mortal. You must set Christ ever before you. You must strive in everything to please Him, and thus do the will of your Father in heaven.

But how may you gain this single eye, and amidst all temptations act as a faithful servant of the Lord ?

First, *you must exercise full and unreserved confidence in God's promises.* You must rely without wavering upon God's free mercy and grace to you in Christ. You must believe in His providential care and watchful love. Remember that disbelief goes side by side with double-mindedness and a resort to carnal expedients. If men cannot trust in God, they will try to shift for themselves, and this will lead them into doubtful paths.

But if men thoroughly trust in God, as Abraham did, then like him they will be ready to obey the hardest precepts, and not shrink from the greatest sacrifices. Therefore, if you want "a single eye," be sure you trust God utterly. Trust Him with your soul, and trust Him with your circumstances. Trust Him to order all events for your good, and to bring you through all troubles and temptations. Trust Him to hear your prayers, and to fill you with His own blessed Spirit. Trust Him in life and in death. So will you the better be enabled in all things to do or suffer His holy will.

A second point is important.

If you would keep a single eye, *you must walk and live as beneath the eye of the Heart-Searcher.* In olden times a sculptor was once asked why he was so particular about the parts of a statue that would be hidden by the wall of the temple for which it was designed. "The gods see it," was his answer. It were well if Christians would remember that their most secret acts and thoughts are ever before Him who searches us through and through.

You may deceive your fellow-men, you may deceive yourself by vain excuses for neglect of work, for choosing as a close friend a follower of the world instead of a follower of Christ, for yielding to the spirit of the world, for withholding time and talents that ought to be dedicated to the service of the Master, but you cannot deceive Him.

Judge everything as in His sight. Think of the hour when every motive and principle of action, as well as every word and deed, will be laid bare.

Thirdly, *make it your set purpose, and at any cost, to do that which is right before Him.* Tolerate in yourself no wrong motive, no wilful neglect of duty, no act of ill, be it small or great. Come what will, go forward in the path of duty. Whatever it cost you, property, or ease, or comfort, do as God bids you. Keep the comfort of a good conscience, and leave all else with God. You will be no loser: God is a good paymaster, and rewards His servants a hundredfold.

“ Less wayward let me be, more pliable and mild ;  
In glad simplicity, more like a little child.

Less, less of self each day, and more, my God, of Thee :  
Oh keep me in the way, however rough it be.

Less of the flesh each day, less of the world and sin ;  
More of Thy Son, I pray, more of Thyself within.

Leave nought that is unmeet ; of all that is mine own  
Strip me ; and so complete my training for Thy throne.”

—BONAR.

## XLI.

*A LIFELONG PROMISE.*

"If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"—*Luke xi. 13.*

MORE than five-and-twenty years ago I had a few words with an old veteran in the army of Christ. For sixty years he had faithfully preached the Gospel of Christ, and, still better, had lived it out in his daily life. He was then near his end, and I put a question to him. I was young and he was old, and I thought he might help me on my way. So I asked him if he had found any particular promise of special assistance to him. He at once named the words at the heading of this chapter. He wanted to know ever more and more of the Lord Jesus, and he knew that none but the Holy Ghost could teach him. The Spirit had long dwelt with him, but still he desired more of the light and love and joy which the Spirit imparts. So this promise was his stay. God would not fail His own word, so he trusted this gracious assurance, and would plead it even to the end.

From the beginning to the end of a Christian life the Holy Spirit is the great worker in the soul of man.

It is so in the case of every true conversion to God. Take a lad who has no thought for his soul. He has a keen sense of the importance of everything that concerns his present welfare. He wishes to get on and rise high, and builds many a castle as to what he will do when he has the means. But he has no feeling as to his sin, nor any desire for a new and holy life.

But far away at the right hand of God is the merciful Redeemer, full of tenderness and love, beholding that lad with compassion, as the Good Shepherd, ready to hear his first prayer, ready to forgive and save him for evermore.

How shall these two meet ? How shall that lad be drawn to the Saviour, for whom as yet he has no love, and still the One who alone can fill his life with blessing and peace ?

Thank God, the blessed Spirit can effect this. He can awaken to earnest thought. He can arouse the sleeping conscience. He can quicken a desire for holiness. He can stir up humble prayer. He can bind together in true union by faith the soul of that hitherto heedless lad and the Merciful Saviour and Redeemer. Then, too, it is by the daily presence and power of the Spirit that the union abides. It is the Spirit which daily reveals the Saviour's love and grace. It is the

same Spirit which gives increasing knowledge of the will of God and increasing power to fulfil it. Only by the Spirit can one sin be trampled under foot, one grace cultivated, or one single action done for the glory of God.

More needful far to each of us is it to have the Spirit with us, than the food we eat or the air we breathe. And God loves to bestow this great and precious gift.

You need not question God's willingness to give you the Spirit because of any amount of sin or unworthiness, or lack of grace in yourself. Christ meets this doubt. He affirms that man is corrupt in the very promise that He gives of the Holy Spirit to counteract what is sinful. Christ assumes this—"If ye, *being evil* ;" and though He puts it by way of contrast between the earthly and heavenly parent, yet He no less teaches that no amount of evil in self need hinder your looking for this boon of love.

Nor should you omit to notice that in the previous verses (9th and 10th) we have no less than six distinct promises of an answer to prayer for this benefit. Why this repetition of promise upon promise, but to drive away unbelief, and to assure us of an answer of peace?

Then consider the argument which Christ employs. He would say—"Your fathers are often partial, selfish, and through sin fail to shew always the kindness they might. Nevertheless, they stretch out a

*willing hand to meet the necessities of their children. Then what of the Great Father, whose name is Love, who is only good? Will He fail to give this priceless boon which He knows to be so essential to the holiness He would have you cultivate?"*

Will you not be assured by such a thought as this? Will you not ask, and ask continually, and in the fullest confidence, that the Good Spirit may come to you and abide with you continually?

Nor forget this also. *He who spake this promise has gone to the Father's right hand to ensure its fulfilment.* In His last discourse, no less than five times (see John xiv.-xvi.) did He remind them that the Comforter should come and dwell with them.

Then after His death and resurrection He ascended to heaven to send upon them the Comforter in His quickening and sanctifying power. Therefore, look up to Him exalted for this very purpose. Rejoice that He waits for the prayers of His people to bestow upon them in fullest measure the gift He so frequently promised.

## XLII.

## THE YOUNG RULER.

"What lack I yet?"—*Matt. xix. 20.*

A MOUNTAIN of self-righteousness lay at the back of this question. He who put it was rich in his possessions, but still richer in his fancied merit. So he comes to Christ and seems to say something of this kind—"I have done my duty. I have fulfilled the law, and this from my youth. I have kept every precept. But tell me, Is there any top-stone I can lay? Is there any good work I can do that may still further adorn my life?"

With a few words Christ touches this grand, imposing edifice of human goodness, and it falls with a crash to the earth. All is gone, not a stone or a brick remains. Humbled and crestfallen he goes back. He kept his gold, but beyond recovery he lost his wealth of goodness.

In many respects the young ruler was a pattern of what a young man should be. He bore a stainless character, in spite of the temptations that wealth brings. With earnestness, and something too of

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humility, he came kneeling at the feet of Jesus. Would there were more of the same spirit! Would that our rich young men were leading pure lives, and had a serious regard for the claims of religion!

And we are told that Jesus, " beholding him, loved him."

There is a great lesson here. Christ has a tender care for those who have not yet given themselves to Him. He sees what there is about them that may lead to something still higher. He does not despise the first dawnings of godliness. If only they will follow on where He would lead, He will guide and bless them all the way.

There seems to some a difficulty about the Lord's first word to this young ruler. He had said to Christ, "Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" He was full of ideas of human goodness. "*You are good and I am good, but tell me how I may be still better.*" Such was his spirit. But Jesus will not hold with this for a moment. "*Goodness, do you speak of? Where shall it be found? Go the wide world over, and not one particle will you find that is not of God.*" "*Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is, God.*"

Surely, then, Christ must be God, for was He not good? Did any man convince Him of sin? Was there one blemish on His holy and beautiful character? Was not every act one of true, unselfish love?

When asked by Christ as to the commandments, he imagines himself to be blameless. "All these have I kept from my youth up : what lack I yet ?"

Was he right ? Did he speak the honest truth ? "Yes," and "No."

Yes, for he was no hypocrite. He believed what he said. He had been no profligate, no thief, no defrauder, no murderer, no wilful deceiver. As to the letter of the law, he was blameless.

No, for he had never sounded the depths of the law. He knew not that it had respect to thoughts, and motives, to omission as well as commission.

Then Christ makes the great demand. He gives the young man a test. He may prove, if he will, his supreme love to God and his unselfish love to man. He bids him go and sell all he has and give to the poor. Then let him follow Him, and he shall have treasure in heaven (Matt. xix. 21).

It was a hard command, but was it too hard ? If the love of God had reigned within, would not the Son of God have been more to him than all his wealth ? If he had loved his neighbour as himself, would he not have been willing to strip himself of all for the sake of the poor ?

Was it so hard a command as that which Abraham obeyed in yielding up Isaac at God's bidding ? Was it a harder command than Moses fulfilled in giving up honour, treasure, and the pleasures that Egypt could bestow ?

But the command was too much for the young

ruler. He goes back, as Orpah to Moab. He goes back, like the man in Bunyan's allegory, holding fast the muck-rake, and despising the crown held out for him to seize. How much he lost, who can tell? He forsook the substance for the shadow, and to keep the gold that perisheth, he rejected the unsearchable riches which for time and eternity he might have obtained.

"What lack I yet?" Is this your question? If standing in the same position as he of whom I have spoken, you lack much. You may be moral, yea, even religious in your own way, but do you heartily yield yourself and all you have to Christ? Do you know the meaning of a broken and contrite heart? Have you cast off for ever all dependence on your own goodness or merit? If not, you lack the one thing needful. You lack pardon and grace and the robe of righteousness. You lack the teaching and comfort and inner power of the Holy Ghost.

But Christ will give all if you ask Him. Never turn away from Him. Rather cleave to Him and wait upon Him. He will care for you, and love you, and supply all your need, and then through Him you shall lack nothing.

## XLIII.

*GOD'S MINDFULNESS OF HIS OWN.*

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."—*Luke xii. 6, 7.*

THE spirit of the age is to put God far away out of man's sight. By many He is regarded as unknown, and unknowable. By many more He is treated as a mere abstraction, as One dwelling in a far-off, inaccessible region which it is impossible for man to approach.

But in the teaching of Holy Scripture it is the very reverse. God is very nigh. Unseen by the natural eye, He is yet present to the keen eye of faith. He is Thy Father. He is a very present help in time of trouble. And we learn, in this passage, the speciality, the individuality, of God's care. The very sparrows, shot down by thousands in Palestine, are remembered by Him. Not one is forgotten. How dear then to His heart are His own people! Created in His likeness, redeemed by His Son, renewed by His Spirit, they are

the sheep of His pasture, His own beloved children, near and dear to Him as the apple of His eye.

In a large school of three or four hundred boys, and no less in a smaller one, there is many a lad depressed by a secret burden of loneliness. You are but one in a crowd, and no one may have any deep interest in you. You may be without any special friend. More particularly at the beginning of school life, the loss of home ties, and the strangeness of all those with whom you are now associated, may prove a very great trial. But here is the very help you need. There is One who does care for you, for you individually, and for everything that concerns you. Think how He cared for Hagar in the desert, when she was all alone and seemed ready to give up all hope. Think of Joseph as a slave lad in Egypt, and how God guided him every step of his life. Think of Elijah threatened by Ahab, and yet so watchfully fed and guided by Jehovah. Think of Manasseh in the dungeon, Nathanael under the fig-tree, Onesimus, the runaway slave, in Rome, and see how God mercifully looked upon each of them and shewed that He was mindful of their need.

Nor is the individuality and tenderness of God's care less in this nineteenth century than in days gone by. The Good Shepherd knows by name each of His flock, and our Heavenly Father has a place in His heart for each of His children.

Dost thou confess thy faults and trust in Thy Saviour? Dost thou desire to forsake evil and to follow the path of holiness? Then believe God cares for thee, even for thee, and loves thee with an everlasting love. Thy name is graven on the palms of His hands, and when those hands are stretched out to protect and to bless, thou canst not be forgotten. When others scorn thee, He smiles upon thee. When the storm is high and thy heart is overwhelmed, He is at hand to shelter and to succour thee. Even when thy foot hath slipped and sin has come in, He will not cast thee away, but will gently rebuke thee and then graciously forgive and heal.

But for your comfort remember another point. God's care for thee *reaches to the very least matters.* "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

With the Omniscient and All-wise there is nothing small or great. And on that which seems to us the smallest often the issue is the greatest. The falling of a leaf, the flight of a bird, a casual meeting, a whispered remark, a note of music, a letter from a friend, may change the whole current of life, and for weal or woe may affect every moment of our future. Therefore be persuaded that nothing is too small for a Father's eye and a Father's love. Bring God into everything. The very least anxiety that weighs upon you you may roll upon Him. He will not despise it. The very least ache or pain of mind or body is a part of His

loving discipline, and will do its work the better if brought to Him. The heaving of a sigh, the dropping of a tear, the unuttered desire and longing of the heart He marks and considers. Be as a little child with your Heavenly Father. Rejoice that with filial confidence you may bring all that concerns you to the mercy-seat. Your home trials, petty annoyances from those about you, the wearied frame, a nervous temperament, something in the house or in the school or the playground that disturbs your peace, and yet that you have reckoned scarcely important enough to name on your knees, tell it out in a Father's ear, and leave it to His merciful and wise ordering.

"Just to leave in His dear hand, little things,  
All we cannot understand, all that stings.  
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This is all, and yet the way  
Marked by Him who loves thee best :  
Secret of a happy day,  
Secret of His promised rest."—F. R. H.

## XLIV.

*THE FADED LEAF.*

"We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away."—*Isa. lxiv. 6.*

WALKING along the street in Cambridge which runs past the principal colleges, my eye followed the constantly flowing rivulet which runs down by its side. And as I looked I thought I saw something of a parable of Cambridge life. I noticed a faded leaf carried along by the current, and it seemed to me something of an illustration of the above text, and also a picture of what is too often seen at the University. Many a young fellow comes up in the brightness and comparative innocence of early youth, but ere he leaves it the beauty and glory of his life is gone, and he is rapidly carried away by the influences of evil that are so strong around him.

Let me give an example. Between forty and fifty years ago a young man went up to Peterhouse, clever, well disposed, and in every way one of whom much might have been expected. For the first three terms he did well, but his staying up for the long vacation

proved a great injury to him. A young fellow of a different stamp had rooms close by him, and gradually drew him into evil courses. He fell, and he fell rapidly. Headlong he rushed into every kind of sin. Drunken brawls were heard in his room, and outside the College he plunged into darker haunts of evil. Very soon he was compelled to leave the University, and all his fair hopes of a bright and honourable course were gone for ever. It was just the faded leaf on the stream. And when his uncle, who was then one of the most eloquent preachers in our Church, shortly afterwards preached at Great St. Mary's, from the words, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed," he drew such a picture of the downward path of a young man caught in the snare of bad company that there was scarcely a dry eye in the whole church, and not a few could tell the sad cause of his special earnestness.

Who can tell out all the sorrow and the loss, the broken health, and it may be to a parent the broken heart, besides the lifelong issues of hindrance and difficulty, and perhaps poverty and want, that come from hearkening to the voice of the tempter?

I remember a remarkable picture I once saw. It was called, "They had been boys together." But one had risen and the other had sunk, from some such cause as I have spoken of, and now the one was fain to seek some scanty alms from the one with whom he had played as a lad.

Even when a timely repentance leads one who has fallen to retrace his steps, yet many of the sad results of the past clog his steps. "Oh, what rocks and stones I have put in my own way!" was the sorrowful confession of a youth who was striving to pick his way through a host of troubles and temptations which his previous conduct had put in his path.

Very earnestly would I entreat you to be on your watch in the matter of purity. With many a lad it is one-half the battle they have to fight.

Thank God, there is a White Cross Army, a band of young fellows who are knit together in a steadfast purpose to resist all that is unchaste and impure in word and deed, and to forward everything that makes for purity amongst others.

But, alas! there is a Black Cross Army too—seducers, defilers, polluters of themselves and others, destroyers both of body and soul, laying hold of the young and inexperienced and dragging them down to the same abyss of evil with themselves.

I pray you take the right side. "Flee youthful lusts." Stand fast in spite of evil companions and of low desires that arise from within. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

But what is your safety? How may you surely avoid such dangers? We might find it in the words of Paul to Timothy, "*My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*"

If you would not be the sport of temptation, and lose all the brightness of an upright and holy life,

here is to be the ground of your confidence. *Let your sole dependence be on the King of grace.* Lean not on yourself, your resolutions, your character, or on anything about you, but lean on the Lord Jesus as your pillar of strength, and as the arm of your defence. He gives pardon and power. He freely forgives through His Sacrifice, and then mightily upholds and strengthens the heart in His fear and love.

*Let your chosen associates be the men of grace.* Give a very wide berth to all doubtful characters. If a lad by word or deed shows that he is set on evil, whosoever chooses his society do you eschew it. But where you find those whose lips are clean, and whose life is pure, and who wish to ascend an upward path, make them your friends, and so do your utmost to stand firm against all the foes of your faith.

Nor forget one other point. *Look upwards for the Spirit of grace.* He will make you strong in will and persevering in action as to that which is according to the will of God. Let but the Holy Ghost dwell within you in power and you will be no faded leaf, carried away by the force of evil, but you will be a good soldier, a mighty warrior on the side of truth and godliness. You will fight a good fight and win a glorious crown; and when your warfare is accomplished here you will receive a joyful welcome from your Captain on the further shore.

## XLV.

### *THE FEAR OF MAN.*

"The fear of man bringeth a snare ; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." — *Prov. xxix. 25.*

THE fear of man is a deadly foe to a godly, consistent life. It stops many a one on the very threshold of the kingdom. It turns back many a one who seemed to run well. It mars the usefulness and stays the progress of not a few true servants of the Lord. We are told by Solomon here that "it bringeth a snare ;" yea, and a hundred snares it sets for the feet of unwary pilgrims. On this account even Abraham more than once was guilty of deceit in the matter of Sarah, and Isaac failed in the very same way. Most probably through fear of offending his young companions Rehoboam lost the best part of his kingdom. Through fear of Jezebel Elijah fled into the wilderness. Through fear of a maid-servant Peter denied the Lord whom he loved, and for fear of the soldiers the rest of the disciples forsook Christ in His hour of sorest need. Through fear of the

Jews Pilate gave up Christ to be scourged and to be crucified, though he knew Him to be innocent. And the same evil is ever at work in the Church. In India at the present day thousands are convinced of the truth of Christianity who yet for this reason dare not confess themselves on the Lord's side.

Let me particularly point out two evils that directly spring from this source, and that perhaps are found nowhere more clearly at work than in a Public School.

*The fear of man often leads to downright positive sin.* Take a lad who is easily led any way by those about him. He may have been well brought up, and would naturally shrink from sins which some others glory in. But he is so linked with young companions that he dare not go against them. So it often comes to pass that a moral, well-intentioned youth falls into the most grievous evil. He may practise deceit and lying ; he may join in schemes that bring trouble and suffering on those far better than himself ; he may waste time that is worth more to him than gold and silver ; he may lose his character for honesty ; he may act a part so cruel and hard-hearted that in God's sight he may be no better than a murderer. This, and much of a like kind, may arise from this noxious root of man's fear.

It is this which often keeps a lad from confessing at once a fault that he has committed. In this way

a fault of a comparatively trifling character becomes the parent of innumerable petty artifices and of a long course of equivocation and double-dealing. Through fear of a slight punishment or reproof a lad cloaks and hides the evil till his character is permanently injured by it.

*The fear of man keeps back many a lad from decision for Christ.* Conscience has been touched; the voice of the Good Shepherd has been heard within; to be a true Christian is seen to be the only safe and happy course. It may be this is the case at Confirmation, or after a sickness or great sorrow, or when he has come in the way of some earnest and faithful preacher of the truth.

Thus he is more than half inclined to cast in his lot with the people of God, and to come out boldly on the Lord's side. But this stumbling-block crosses his path. He has an elder brother or a school companion who may hold him up to ridicule if he is too particular. So he will not take up his cross. He is afraid to be found on his knees or with an open Bible. He hides his religion for a season; then, when his former impressions have died away, he gives it up altogether, and is much further from the kingdom of God than he was before.

Is this the case with any one who reads these pages? Are you kept back from a decided course by the thought of another? Are you afraid of confessing Christ, of standing up for truth and righteousness, of a faithful word in reproof of sin?

But why should you be ?

A bold and consistent Christian course will soon secure you the respect of those whose good opinion is worth having. If others laugh or scorn, let them do so. The worst they can do will not really harm you. Think of the words of Christ. In warning you not to fear your fellow-sinners, see how He puts Himself before you as the One who will be sure to befriend you.

"I say unto you, *my friends*, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him " (Luke xii. 4, 5).

Remember, too, the noble words of Luther when all the power of authority in Europe was leagued against him, and he had the courage to stand firm in the truth—

"God's Word, for all their craft and force,  
One moment will not linger,  
But spite of hell shall have its course ;  
'Tis written by His finger.  
And though they take our life,  
Goods, honour, children, wife,  
Yet is their profit small ;—  
These things shall vanish all,  
The city of God remaineth."

## XLVI.

*THE SNARE OVERCOME.*

"I, even I, am He that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass?"—*Isa. li. 12.*

DURING the Indian Mutiny, for many weeks the fort of Agra was exposed to great danger, and the garrison and many ladies and others within were daily anticipating an attack by the mutineers. Knowing the terrible cruelties practised by the rebels, the fear of what might happen was almost insupportable. But one day a torn leaf of a Bible was picked up within the fort on which the above words were found with their context.

It seemed almost as a message from Heaven, sent to sustain and cheer them. The thought of God's comforting presence, and His mighty power to help and deliver, encouraged them exceedingly, and led them to look for a happy issue out of their trouble. By-and-by the hope was realised. Succour came, and every cause for anxiety was soon after removed.

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Let these words, my young brother, be a strength to you likewise. You may be sorely tried sometimes by the reproach or opposition of others. You may now and then have to stand alone and to do your duty when it is hard and painful to do it. You may lose a friend through acting conscientiously, or bring down upon yourself a storm of ridicule or ill-will. But never mind. Here is your answer. "God is on my side ; why shall I fear ? Man is but for a day. Soon he becomes as the withering grass. Before many years he must die and pass away. But the Living God is my friend. He will plead my cause and take my part."

"God with me in every place;  
Firmly doth the promise stand,  
On land or sea, with present grace,  
Still to aid me near at hand ;  
If you ask—'What comforts thee ?'  
It is this—God is with me."

Cheer up, brother, don't mind rough words, or even rough deeds, if you keep a good conscience and look up for help to Him who made heaven and earth.

Think of this. God Himself, the Lord of men and angels, the Lord of Providence and grace, He is very near thee, nearer than the one whom you dread ; nearer than the lad who loves to torment and plague you ; nearer than the one who sleeps next you in the same dormitory, or the boy who sits next you in the class.

"Thou art near, O Lord." "Nevertheless, I am

continually with thee." "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

Think of this also. *He is the God "that comforteth you."* If others trouble and distress you, God can and will comfort. He will send you the Comforter. He will suggest promises and thoughts full of comfort. When everything looks black and threatening, some ray of comfort and peace shall break through the clouds and send you on your way rejoicing.

Then another thought. He has the hearts and ways of all men at His disposal. When He will, He can soften the hardest heart, and make the one who has pained you most to be your warmest supporter. Or, if He will, He can just give a turn to the wheel, and change the position of matters altogether. He can in some way remove out of the way the cause of your distress. He can give you a friend or companion whose society is a perfect treasure to you. He knows best how to bring your feet out of the net. Therefore, trust in Him and wait His time.

Look at Acts xii. At the beginning of the chapter the whole horizon is thick with clouds. James is slain; Peter is in prison, and seems certainly doomed; the oppressor purposes to carry out his design, and there appears no power to withstand. But prayer comes in. Believing, persevering, united prayer is offered, and all is changed. Peter is set free and escapes. The proud oppressor is eaten of worms and laid in the dust. The Word of God goes forth, and the Church increases and spreads.

Once more. See how God's heroes in all time have conquered this deadly foe. The fear of man is strong, but faith in God is stronger, and can enable the Christian to trample it under his feet.

Moses braved the wrath of mighty Pharaoh, "for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

David faced Goliath without trembling, because he knew that the Lord was his shield and buckler.

Elijah was not afraid of Ahab, or of all the priests of Baal, or of the whole nation of Israel, when he stood alone on Mount Carmel.

Daniel and his companions were not afraid of being cast to the lions or into the burning furnace, for they knew that God was mindful of His own, and could protect and save them.

Stephen could look up to heaven with the face of an angel, though his enemies gnashed upon him with their teeth and the stones were quickly doing their deadly work.

You, too, shall conquer by the power of faith. Only rely upon the power and the promise of Jehovah. Only look up, like Stephen, to see the Son of Man exalted to the Father's right hand. Fret not because you have thorns and briars to pass through. Fear not because the plans of the ungodly seem to prosper for a season. Hold fast your banner and let none pluck it out of your hand. Rejoice in the motto that stands out so plainly upon it—"IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?"

## XLVII.

### *THE GOOD ANCHOR.*

"A good hope through grace." — 2 *Thess.* ii. 16.

A STORM is at its height, and two ships under stress of the weather are driven toward the land. The one casts anchor, and thus is able to remain in safety until the violence of the storm is past. The other too casts anchor, but in vain. The anchor snaps, and the ship is driven upon the rocks, to the total loss of the cargo and of the lives of the sailors.

Alas for the sailor that has a bad anchor in the day when the tempest is high! Alas for the soul, the anchor of whose hope fails when most it is needed! But it is a blessed thing to have a good hope, a sure hope, a hope that will never make ashamed. It is that of which St. Paul speaks in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, and it is that which is also spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Which hope we have as anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast" (Heb. vi. 19).

It is well for every one to prove and try the

character of his hope. As there are "proving houses" and "testing houses" where anchors and iron chains and cables are carefully tried before they are sent to sea, so we must take heed to ourselves, and see whether the hope we cherish will abide in the hour of death and judgment.

But how may you know? What is that good hope that will hold fast and never fail you?

*A good hope always begins on self-despair.* We never find true hope in God till we discover we have no hope and no help in ourselves. A lad perhaps had great ideas of himself and his own powers. He could break the chain of his own sin, and could easily live a high and noble and Christian life. But he finds out his mistake. He fails again and again. Like Peter he promises great things, but he does not perform. Then God teaches him His own weakness, his guiltiness in the sight of a holy law, and all self-resources fail. Then another light bursts upon him. He learns where true help is to be found, and secures a hope that grows stronger and stronger as days roll on.

Have you, my young friend, begun here? Have you cast aside all thoughts of your own wisdom, goodness, and strength? Have you trodden self under foot that you may find all your help in God?

*A good hope rests on the sure word of God.* "I have a good hope because of Thy word" (Ps. cxix. 81, P. B. Version). A good hope can only rest on this foundation. What God hath spoken will

stand fast for ever, whilst everything else partakes of the frailty and uncertainty of this life. If you want a good hope, learn to put your finger on chapter and verse for what you believe and expect. Make sure that it is in accordance with the revealed will of God. God is faithful and true, both in His threatenings and in His promises, and in due season they shall all be made good. Therefore rest here and you are safe. Be well grounded in the doctrines of Holy Scripture. Let all your confidence arise from this source. Then your hope will be a good hope, for it will have a good foundation. Though heaven and earth pass away, though heart and flesh fail, yet the man who reposes on the truth of God shall stand firm on the rock and shall never be moved.

*A good hope is that which glories only in the grace of God through Christ.* It is "a good hope through grace." Not through human merit, or works, or self-improvement, or repentance, or anything of the kind. It comes through the free, undeserved, unbought goodness and loving-kindness of God. "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23, Revised Version).

True it is, that you could never enjoy this good hope except through toil and suffering and pain and death. But it is that of your Surety, the Lord Jesus, and not anything of your own. Your part is but to own your need, and to take by faith the unspeakable benefit that through His work of atonement comes to you.

"Nothing have I, Lord, to pay,  
Nor can Thy grace procure ;  
Empty send me not away,  
For I Thou know'st am poor.  
Dust and ashes is my name,  
My all is sin and misery ;  
Friend of sinners, spotless Lamb,  
Thy blood was shed for me."

*A good hope enters within the veil, and takes hold of our great Melchizedek-Priest.* Just as the anchor lies out of sight whilst it holds fast the ship, so our hope passes beyond all seen and present objects, and grasps the hand of our exalted and glorified High Priest (Heb. vi. 19, 20).

A good hope is ever fixed on Christ, "able to save to the uttermost," because ever living to make intercession for us. Amidst all doubts and distresses you must look unto Him. He pleads with authority as the Son of God. He pleads with efficacy, for His blood is ever precious. He pleads with sympathy, for by experience He knows our griefs and temptations. And he pleads with never-failing success, for no soul is ever lost who humbly trusts in Him.

Thank God for ever, for our merciful and faithful High Priest ! He makes reconciliation for sin. He succours the afflicted (Heb. ii. 17, 18). He mingles our unworthy prayers with the "sweet incense" of His meritorious work. He will not fail thee, brother, if only thine eye is upon Him and thy hope toward Him.

*A good hope is that which purifies the soul.*  
“Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure” (1 John iii. 3).

Holiness of life is no ground for our hope, but it is the sure result of it. It is no foundation to rest upon, but it is that which proves its truth and reality. Where there is a good hope, the Spirit of God dwells, and there the fruit of the Spirit will be found. Where there is a good hope, there is “faith that worketh by love,” and such faith cannot be idle or destitute of obedience and good works. Every hope that does not lead to watchfulness in the daily walk, bridling the tongue, and efforts to do good to others,—every such hope is a delusion and a sham, and will prove the ruin of the soul that depends upon it.

What sort of an anchor is thine, brother? *If a bad one, cast it away, and get a better before the storm comes that will try every man's hope of what sort it is.*

## XLVIII.

*THE MIDNIGHT CRY.*

"Behold the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him."—*Matt. xxv. 6* (Revised Version).

THE scene to which these words refer stands out in bold relief before us. It is an Eastern marriage, and, as usual, at night. To the marriage-festival ten young maidens are invited. They accept the invitation, and go forth to the wedding. The bridegroom has gone to the house of the bride, and the guests tarry by the wayside until he returns, bringing the bride and her friends with him in the procession. But there is delay and a time of waiting. In the warm Eastern clime the maidens become drowsy, and resting in some quiet spot, sleep overtakes them. But soon the cry is heard—"Behold the bridegroom!" and they hastily awake. They trim their lamps and prepare to join the procession and enter the banqueting-chamber with the rest. But with five of their number a fatal error has been committed. They have made no provision for delay, and their torches or lamps

are just going out for lack of oil, and they have none with which to replenish them. In vain they seek a remedy. First they apply to their companions, and afterwards elsewhere, for a supply. But it is too late. The door is shut. No welcome, no wedding-feast for them! No bright joyous hours that night in company with the bridegroom. They had their chance, but they lost it. They may knock, they may plead, but their only answer is—"I know you not." So they must go back into the outer darkness, far away from the light and gladness of that festive scene. Whilst their companions are safe within, they are shut out, and must bear as best they can the loss and the disappointment.

The whole parable is a picture of the Church as it is now and as it will be in the day of the Master's coming.

There is now a marvellous similarity between the true and the false—those who are Christ's and those who are not. Look at these virgins. They had been called to the feast and had accepted the invitation. In the same attire, each bearing her torch, they had alike come out to meet the bridegroom. All alike slumbered and slept during the time of delay.

And have we not the parallel amongst ourselves? The same Gospel is proclaimed to all, and many in a sense accept the call. They come to the house of God, they join in our Creeds,

and even draw near to the Lord's Table. They carry a certain moral and religious bearing and tone; they are free from open vice; they reckon themselves amongst the people of God. Yet is there a gulf between them as wide as that between heaven and hell. Some are born of God, some are yet children of darkness. Some are journeying home to the Father's house; some, in spite of all profession, are becoming more and more unfit for the abode of light and love.

How is it with you? Are you amongst the wise or foolish? Are you saved in Christ, or yet in your sins? Are you prepared for the great day, or yet leaving all to the chance of the future?

But what was the essential difference between the wise and foolish virgins? It was not simply their failing to watch. It was something deeper. They had the torch, but no oil in the vessel. It was this which sealed their doom, and shut them out from the joy of the feast.

And what is the essential difference between the saved and the unsaved? It is a heart void of the Spirit. It is the lack of true inner grace. There may be the name to live, but there is none of the life of faith and love which the Spirit brings. As it is written, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9).

You may have everything but this; you may have all Christian privileges, good training, a godly home; you may be kind and amiable, and carry a

name for serious attention to religion. But have you the Spirit? Have you something of a spiritual mind? Have you the Spirit making you shrink from evil, and drawing your heart upwards to God?

One day this will be made plain. The cry will be heard, "Behold the Bridegroom!"

Advent after Advent quickly passes by. Still nearer comes that day. The Lord cannot much longer delay. Though centuries have elapsed since He told of it, yet the Word is sure. Each event hastens it forward. The witness for His truth and the spread of error are both signs of His coming.

Brother, be ready for that time! When the great clock of eternity has struck—who shall turn it back?

"Then, O my Lord, prepare  
My soul for that great day!  
O wash me in Thy precious blood  
And take my sins away."

## XLIX.

*"READ, MARK, LEARN."*

OUR Reformers found no Collect in the ancient service-books bearing on the study of Holy Scripture, and they did well in preparing one. And, perhaps, scarcely one of the Collects they have given to us is more helpful. It tells of the loving-kindness that gave us the Book. It tells of the spirit in which we should hear and read it. It tells of the end we should have in view in the study of it.

“Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Mark the steps in the study of Scripture.

“*Hear them.*” “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Never let a listless spirit lead you to hear as though you heard not. Be as a listener at

the feet of Jesus whenever the Word is read or spoken.

*"Read."* You must read for yourself. Let no day pass without your reading carefully a few verses. Read punctually day by day. Read systematically. Read through a whole Gospel or Epistle. Read till you are well acquainted with the whole Bible.

*"Mark."* Take note of what you read. Put, if you will, a mark against special passages, but at least beware of "the veil of customariness"—letting the eye wander over the page without any definite impression in the mind. From each passage you read it is well to single out one verse or sentence to lay up in your heart for meditation.

*"Learn."* Exercise the memory in the Word of God. Learn by heart selected portions, and thus make them your own for life (Ps. xxv.; Matt. v. 1-16; John xv.; Eph. vi., are invaluable for this purpose).

*"Inwardly digest."* Turn over in your mind whatever you read. Compare one part with another, and apply all you read to your own circumstances. Let it remind you of your faults and shortcomings. Let it lead you to the source of all grace and help.

Thus you search the Scriptures with profit. The lessons you learn will help you in every temptation and trouble through which you pass.

But the Collect points out in a striking way the final purpose we should have in the study of it. "That . . . we may embrace and ever hold fast the

*blessed hope of everlasting life which Thou hast given to us in our Saviour Jesus Christ."*

Is there not here something of a parable? You see a ship cast upon the rocks. Those on board are in imminent peril of their lives. But by means of a rocket a rope reaches the shipwrecked man. The means of safety are put into his hand. If he can but grasp and hold fast the rope he may escape to shore and his life be preserved.

Through the guilt and power of sin all men are liable to condemnation and death. They may sink in the deep waters and perish for ever. But in Holy Scripture the rope is cast out. The offer of salvation in Christ is made to all men. The invitation is free, and whosoever will may find pardon and life.

*But the rope must be seized and held tight.* We must "embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope."

But how may you do this? The Holy Spirit will teach you through the Word. First you need a simple, hearty faith. You must know your lost condition, and place yourself in the Saviour's hands. You must look to Him freely to forgive you through His blood all that is past, and to bestow upon you the presence and power of His good Spirit. You must give Him credit for being as good as His word, and rely upon His sure promise. In thus acting *you lay hold of the rope.* You embrace by faith the glorious salvation provided in the Gospel.

But never forget that you must *ever hold fast*. There are sure to be many things that will come in your way. There are enemies about who strive to pluck the rope out of your hand. You may meet with no little reproach and ridicule if you are thorough and true as a Christian ought to be. The habits of school life are not always favourable to a godly walk. Temptations of the flesh may arise, and possibly sometimes no little darkness may cloud your sky; but seek patience. Quiet, patient endurance is the path to victory. And the comfortable words of Holy Scripture will always help you.

Even if you have fallen, never despair. Rise up again, and you shall yet be more than conqueror through Christ. You shall hold on and hold fast till trial and temptation are passed, and you receive the crown of glory that belongs to every faithful warrior. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

## L.

*ABIDE IN CHRIST.*

"Now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."—*I John ii. 28.*

I CAN quite understand how some lad might rather turn away from such a title as John here gives the disciples. You are buoyant and strong, and ready to face difficulties, and are afraid of no one. So you rather would reckon yourself to be a man than amongst "little children." I am quite aware that there is a right sense in which you may be told to "act as a man," yet never forget that the Divine Teacher calls upon every disciple to become as a child. And even for the strongest and heartiest lad, is there not a pleasure now and then in becoming as a little child again with an earthly parent? When suffering pain, or in a real trouble, or after a sore disappointment, is it not a relief to unbend by your mother's side, and almost imagine you have gone back some five or ten years to the time when you were quite young?

Now, this is what we want, ever to be with the Lord Jesus. Even till old age it is a blessed thing to come to Him with the humility and trustfulness of a child, and to leave ourselves in His mighty and faithful keeping. This is that to which John calls us. It is a good thing to come to Him at first; it is still better to cleave to Him and abide in Him even to the end. In doing this, remember three points—

I. *Abide in Christ's word.* "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples" (John viii. 32, Revised Version). It is a saying of Lord Bacon's that "the Scripture is written to the thoughts of men in all ages, and with a foresight of all the different circumstances of the Church, and of each member of it." Very especially is this the case with the Word spoken by Christ and by His Apostles through His Spirit. Therefore study that Word, and abide in the faith of it. Search and see where that Word meets your thoughts and your position. And each day lay hold on some precious gem of truth that shall nerve and strengthen you in your Christian life.

II. *Abide beneath the cross of Christ.* What do I mean by this? It is very plain. *Trust only and always in the sacrifice of Christ as the answer to every accusation of conscience.* Be honest with God about your sins. Abhor all excuses. Take shame for each, small and great, before the mercy-seat. Be determined at all costs to give up anything you know to be wrong. Then believe without

a doubt that the blood of Christ fully cleanses you from them. Thus you stand beneath the shelter of the cross, and there learn both to hate sin, and to rejoice that it is completely put away out of God's sight.

III. *Abide in fellowship and communion with Him.* These words of St. John go back to the teaching of our Lord in John xv. He is as the Vine-stem and we the branches. And as each branch can only live and grow and bear fruit by its union with the stem, so the Christian can only live truly by cleaving to Christ. Severed from Him you can do nothing. Forsake Christ, give up faith and prayer, and your soul will be as a withered and dried branch. Without keeping near to Him it is impossible to resist sin, to think or act aright, or to bear any fruit for His glory. Therefore trust much, pray much, and you shall be as a "fruitful bough" laden with rich clusters. You shall be holy and happy and useful. And when Christ comes again, it will be to your exceeding joy. He will acknowledge your faith and reward your service. He will own you as one of His own, and set you on His right hand and give you the eternal inheritance.

But what a contrast will then appear in the case of those who had only the outward profession without the reality !

The wilful sinner, the hollow professor, the hearer of the Word who is not a doer, the deceiver, the backslider, the hypocrite, the unpardoned and un-

saved,—these all will be ashamed in the light of that day. But abiding in Christ now, you will rejoice. You will have boldness and confidence before Him. You know that He is your Saviour and your friend, and that He will receive you to Himself. You will lift up your head and say—“This is my Friend, my King, my God. He has heard my prayers, washed away my sins, and given me His Spirit. For many a day I have been an outdoor servant, doing His work in the world. Now I shall go and serve within His palace and share His glory for ever.”

## LI.

*RICHES THROUGH CHRIST'S POVERTY.*

IT seems a strange thing that the two emblems of redemption should be a manger and a cross. Yet so it is. The one shows the depth of Christ's humiliation at His birth, the other at His death. And over both the eye of faith, enlightened by His Spirit, may read such words as these—"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9).

Behold in this passage two ladders. By the one you see the Son of God stooping to become the Son of man, and as such taking up our heritage of sorrow, suffering, and death.

By the other you see man rising from depths of sin and woe to become the child of the living God, and as such to receive an inheritance of peace, life, and glory. Look at both sides.

It is not often seen on earth—a rich man giving up wealth and becoming poor for the sake of others. Occasionally, however, we see something akin to it.

An emperor has been known to leave his throne and to work in a dockyard that he might raise his people. A father has been known to give up his own comfortable home and live in comparative poverty that he might save a son from the exposure of his dishonest practices.

But far, far beyond all possible comparison was the self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

Think how rich was Christ in His glory with the Father. *Think of the honour which was His due.* All the angels of God worshipped Him. Cherubim and Seraphim adored Him—"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts" (see John xii. 41).

Take your flight in imagination to the most distant realms of God's universe, and there the Son of God was adored by the highest intelligences.

He was *rich as the heir of all things.* All things were made by Him and for Him. You say a monarch is rich who has a kingdom of unbounded wealth beneath his sway. But the Son of God could claim this world and all worlds as His. Not a planet, not a distant star, nor one of those countless bodies in the deep azure sky, but owned Him as its Lord and King.

He was *rich in the Father's love.* "The Father loveth the Son." "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Oh, what a treasure of joy was this to Christ! And all this had been His from eternity. None can imagine or describe the majesty, the glory, the wealth of possession, of love, of joy that pertained to Him ere the world was.

Yet all was laid aside. He was rich, yet he became poor.

*Was He high in honour?* He stooped to become the child of a Galilean peasant. He was despised and rejected of men. At His birth no room was found for Him in the village caravansera. At His death He was treated as a criminal of the lowest class and nailed to a cross.

*Was He rich as the possessor of all things?* While here below He had nothing of His own. He was nourished as an infant at His mother's breast, and in later days supplied by the alms of those who followed Him. He knew the meaning of hunger and thirst. Oft-times he had not where to lay His head. At last they laid Him in another's tomb.

*Was He beloved of His Father?* On earth they hated Him without a cause. Though His whole life was spent for others, yet envy, jealousy, malice tracked every footstep. His friends forsook Him, and His enemies even after death pursued Him with bitter hatred. Even the Father withheld for a season the light of His countenance, so that for the moment He seemed forsaken both of God and man.

And for what did He stoop to all this? Why did He become thus poor? It was for our enriching. It was to raise man from soul-poverty and to give Him possession of the true riches.

For the riches which Christ imparts are the only true riches. Business may prosper, wealth may flow in through various channels, men may have an

interest in mines, estates, government securities, and the like. But these may grow valueless, or we may be unable to find pleasure in the possession of them.

But in Christ is gold tried in the fire, a treasure that never faileth, and whose possession gives evermore true and abiding joy. And in whatsoever Christ was poor, in that we receive the corresponding riches.

For the shame and contempt He endured He gives the highest honour, a place in the family of the Great King, and thus the once degraded sinner becomes one of the nobility of heaven.

For the loss of all things we gain all things. We become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. "All things are yours."

For the hatred poured upon Christ, unchangeable, eternal love. The love of the Father, the love of Christ, the love of the Spirit, the love of every angel in heaven and every saint in glory—all are ours in Christ.

For the sorrows which Christ bore comes to man a portion of true, lasting joy, a song of gladness that never ceases, a river, yea, rivers of pleasure for evermore.

Oh the poverty of a soul without Christ! In less than half an hour every earthly thing may be yours no longer, and all beyond a dark, dark blank!

Oh the riches untold that belong to the soul that comes to Him and cleaves to Him! For

Christ Himself, His favour, His white robes, His everlasting love, His anointing, His glorious kingdom—these are thine through all the ages to come.

Art thou poor or rich, brother? Oh seek to be rich indeed! Be not content without a Saviour's grace! Ask Him to fulfil in thee the purpose of His coming. Let this Christmas season be the brightest and best you have ever had. Learn to know Him who gives it all its glory. Then learn like Him to sacrifice thyself for others, and to have a spirit ever alive to the wants and woes of suffering humanity.

## LII.

## THE WORK OF LIFE.

"I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day ;  
the night cometh, when no man can work."—*John ix. 4.*

A FRIEND was passing by the entrance-gate of a cemetery in Italy. Over it he saw words worth remembering—" *Hodie mihi, cras tibi.*" "*My lot to-day, yours to-morrow.*" It is a truth that comes home to us, especially as another year draws on to its close. In man's constitution there is a strange power of putting out of sight the thought of our latter end. Perhaps in a measure this is well. If we had always a vivid recollection of the nearness of death, it might unfit us for doing life's work as heartily and joyfully as we otherwise do. Nevertheless this facility for putting the thought of death aside needs to be corrected and supplemented by a sober, wise estimate of what life really is, of its purpose, and of the constant care needful for using it aright. We should often recall the fact that the time is short, and that life at its best is

always uncertain. The motto already named may remind us of this. "*My lot to-day, yours to-morrow.*" To-day you may see a few mourners carrying with them the remains of one very dear to them; to-morrow a similar company may leave your door, and you may be the one to be left behind in the silent grave. To-day you may pass a house where the blinds are down and where there lies one who has just passed away. To-morrow it may be in the street where you have lived and in the house cheered by your presence, and you the one around whom all their grief has centred. To-day you may take the *Times* newspaper, and to your surprise notice the sudden death of one you saw not a week ago. To-morrow a friend of yours may take up the paper, and it is your name he sees in the same column.

I don't wish this thought to cast one shadow of gloom over your young days. I am convinced that truth, whatever it be, can only be for good if used aright, and this very truth may gladden and brighten every day of your life, if it makes life more worthy of the name.

Did you ever notice the two prayers of Moses in the Psalm (90th) which tells most of man's frailty?

He reminds us that "a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." He reminds us that man is but as the grass which flourisheth and groweth up in the morning, and in the evening it is cut down and withereth.

Our threescore years and ten soon come to an end like a short reverie or tale. Then amongst others he offers these two petitions:

"So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Both are linked together. It is as if he would say: "Let the remembrance of life's short day lead us to seek for heavenly wisdom. That wisdom will lead us unto Thee. We shall walk in Thy fear. We shall taste Thy mercy. So will this short life of ours be filled with true rejoicing. All our days will be brightened with the sense of Thy presence as we journey on to Thee our Eternal Home."

Act in the spirit of these prayers. Employ this short life to the very best advantage. Take a very high view of the possibilities of lasting blessing to yourself and others which it presents, and then strive that that blessing may never be forfeited through any fault of yours.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, and day by day act in the spirit of them: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."

Is it full day with you? Is the sun shining overhead? Is the darkness past? Is it peace in the conscience? Is it the comfort of God's free favour received by faith in Christ? Can you look

upward to the bright heaven above you and hear a voice whispering within, "Abba, Father?" If you want life to be joyous and full of peace and usefulness, take care that there be no cloud betwixt you and God. If sin has been kept back, if anything has been amiss, own it to your Father, and then doubt not that through Christ it is perfectly forgiven, and that God regards you as one very near and dear to Him.

If you remember these words of Christ you will be no idler, no mere camp-follower, but an earnest, diligent worker in everything you take in hand. "I must work," said Christ, and so must you. "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Let no grass grow under your feet. Let no rust be found upon your sword. Let no weeds grow in your garden.

No, no, young friend. Wage war with sloth even to the death. Be a hero in the strife. Whether in the schoolroom, in the study, or in the playground, be A I, at least in your efforts to do the very best you can.

Don't sink down to commonplace in anything. By hard, painstaking toil, plod on whether you have few talents or many, and it may be you shall reach the highest round of the ladder in your work or profession, and if you don't you will feel at least that you did your duty; and no man can do more.

Above all, if you want life to be no failure, but the very noblest possible, strive to catch the spirit

of our Lord's working. Not only work, but "work the works of Him that sent you."

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